

THE

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Within the Precincts.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THOUGHT.



HE appearance of the new Mrs. Despard in the Abbey made a very great impression. The brilliancy of her blue silk and the bushiness of her orange-blossoms were calculated to strike awe into all beholders. There was scarcely a lady within the Precincts who did not feel herself personally insulted by the appearance of the milliner girl flaunting in her bridal finery and taking her place by right among them. As for the wives of the Chevaliers, their indignation was too great for words.

Mingled curiosity and enmity had brought them out in larger numbers than usual, to see the creature, if she was so lost to every feeling of shame as to show herself; and it is scarcely necessary to say that Polly was in that particular entirely lost to every feeling of shame. She came in with

her Captain, clinging to his arm, and whispering to him, even in the sacred quiet of the Abbey, and as the pair were late, and almost the entire congregation had assembled, nothing was wanting to the full enjoyment of her triumph. Polly felt, when she raised her head, after that momentary homage to the sacred place which even in her state of excitement she felt bound to make, that one object of her life was attained, that everybody was staring at her, and that in her blue silk she was more the centre of regard than the Dean himself under his canopy, or the Minor Canon just about to begin the service, who perceptibly paused, in acknowledgment of the little rustle and commotion which accompanied her entrance. The feelings of the ladies among whom this intruder pushed her way may be imagined. It was all that Mrs. O'Shaughnessy could do, she said afterwards, to refrain from throwing her hymn-book at the head of the jaunty Captain, as he handed his bride into her place, before taking his own among his brother Chevaliers. The ladies in the Abbey were divided from their partners, being placed in a lower row, and to see the Captain pass on to his stall with a swing of elation in his step after handing his bride to her seat, was enough to make any veteran blaspheme. Why should a man be so proud of himself because he has got a new wife? The imbecile glow of vanity and self-congratulation which in such circumstances comes over the countenance, nay, the entire person, even of the wisest, conveys exasperation to every looker-on. The sentiment of indignation, however, against Captain Despard was mingled with pity; but scarcely even contempt sufficed to soften the feeling with which Polly in her blue silk was universally regarded. Polly was an intruder, an aggressor. The very way in which she tossed her head upwards with its bristling crown of artificial flowers was an offence. The ladies might have their little differences now and then, and it was an undoubted fact that Mrs. Dalrymple, for instance, who was very well connected, had never been able to endure Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, who had no connections at all; but now they all clung together as with one impulse. They crowded upon each other in the seat, so as to leave a clear space between them and Polly, who, unabashed, took full advantage of it, and spread out her flounces, her blue silken skirts around her, with a rustle of defiance. Mrs. Temple was the one who was left next to Mrs. Despard. This lady, who took no notice at first, soon roused up, and putting on her spectacles, looked very seriously at the intruder. Polly faced round upon her, with dauntless readiness, but Mrs. Temple's look was so serious, that even Polly felt somewhat discomfited. She felt this new observer's eyes upon her all the time. "Who was that old woman who stared at me so?" she asked, scarcely taking the trouble to whisper, as her husband led her round the nave while the voluntary was being played. "That! that's the wife of an old idiot who gives himself no end of airs," said the Captain. "I thought as much," said Polly, tossing her head, "but she'll find I can stare just as well as she can. Two can play at that game." She spoke so loudly that some of

the people near said, "Hush-sh!" The Signor was just then playing a very delicate cadenza in the minor key.

Mrs. Temple took her old husband's arm without a word, and went straight home. He had not himself been at the service, but met her at the door; where he too saw the bride in her blue silk. The old Captain did nothing but shake his head. He could not trust himself to speak. "What are things coming to?" he said at last, as they got within their own door. "When that young fellow was made a Chevalier, I said nothing could come of it but mischief to the community." Captain Despard, being only fifty, was a young fellow to this veteran. "Never mind the community," said Mrs. Temple, which was a bold thing to say. It was getting late in the October afternoon, and within the little sitting-rooms of the Lodges it seemed dark, coming in even from the grey afternoon skies outside. Mrs. Temple rang for the lamp before she went upstairs to take off her bonnet. She was very full of thought, and sighed as she went. Her own girl, for whom she would so gladly have died, was gone, leaving father and mother desolate—and here was another poor girl who lived, but had no one to care for her. Strange are the decrees of Providence. Mrs. Temple sighed as she came downstairs again to where her old Captain sat gazing at the lamp with a sorrowful face. "Yes, my dear," he said as she came in, "you were right to say never mind the community. After all, I suppose there is no community in the world that has not its black sheep. Nobody will be so foolish as to confound *us* with such a fellow; but when I think of that poor girl——"

"That is what I have been thinking of," said Mrs. Temple; "but perhaps," she added, still unwilling to betray her interest in Lottie, that interest which was half opposition, "perhaps she may not feel it so much as we suppose."

"Feel it! I have not liked to say very much about her, my dear. She reminds me so of our own —— and I know you could not bear to talk of that," said the good Captain, innocent of the fact that he had talked of little else for months past. "But if you only knew her better! There is something in her walk—in the turn of her head—that so reminds me—but I never liked to say much about it. You must not think she does not feel it. I met her and was talking with her just before I came for you. But for leaving you alone I should have taken her for a walk; it would have done her good. I believe she rushed off to the Slopes after all."

"I do not think she would get much good on the Slopes," said Mrs. Temple, thinking of the little wind of gossip about Mr. Rollo Ridsdale which had begun to breathe about the Lodges.

"She would get fresh air—and quiet; she likes that; she is a very thoughtful girl, my dear—very serious, just like our own poor ——. You must forgive me if I am always seeing resemblances. Lottie is very fond of the twilight. I have gone with her so often I know her tastes. Many

a time I have done the same with —. When I feel her little arm in mine, I could almost think sometimes that other days have come back."

The shadow of Mrs. Temple's cap quivered on the wall. The thought of the little arm in his, the other days, which this simple touch brought back, was not sweet but terrible to her. A film floated before her eyes, and something choking and intolerable rose in her throat. "I do not suppose," she said hastily, "that a girl brought up like that can mind as one thinks."

The Captain shook his head. "I wish you knew her better," he said, with that soft answer which turns away irritation. The servant-maid came in with the tray at this moment, and Mrs. Temple began to pour out the tea. She was a little tired, having had many things to do that day, and it occurred to her suddenly that to lean back in her easy-chair as the Captain was doing, and to have her cup of tea brought to her, would be sweet. To have some one to wait upon her tenderly and read her wishes in her eyes, and divine her thoughts before they came to her lips, that would be sweet. But could anyone do that except a child, could anything but love do it, and that sacred influence which is in the blood, the same blood running in the different veins of parent and child? These thoughts went through her mind without anybody being the wiser. She gave her husband his tea, and sat down in her turn to rest a little. There was nothing said in the still little room. The two together, did not they know all each other's thoughts and wishes and recollections? They were old, and what could happen to them except the going out to the Abbey, the coming in to tea? But if there had been three instead of two—and one young, with all a dawning world before her feet—everything would have borne a very different aspect. Ah! Mrs. Temple moved quickly, as she had the habit of doing when that recollection, always present to her mind, struck suddenly like a new blow. And here was a creature, helpless, forlorn, without a mother to fly to. The mother who had no child stood doubtful between earth and heaven, asking, speechless, what she was to do: pass by on the other side as if there was no mother in her? or pardon God for taking her child, and hold out her hand to His? She did not know what to do. Things were not easy for her as for her husband. It was cruel of this girl even to live, to pass by a poor woman's windows who had lost her child; yet what was the woman to do when this creature who was living, who was an offence to her, was in trouble? Let her sink and never hold out a hand? But what then would the other girl in heaven think of her mother? Mrs. Temple was torn by this conflict of which she gave no sign, while perhaps the old Captain in his kind and simple heart, yearning over the young creature who was so helpless and desolate, was unjust to his wife and thought her less than kind.

And it was not only in Captain Temple's house that Polly's appearance was the cause of excitement. The Signor put his hand upon the arm of his young assistant as they went out together by the north door.

"Did you see them?" he said, with meaning. Young Purcell was pale with excitement. He had done nothing but watch Polly promenading through the nave on her husband's arm, and the very fact of Lottie's superiority to himself made him feel with more horror the impossibility of any harmony between her and Polly, whom he considered so much inferior to himself. He had watched her from the organ-loft, while the Signor played the voluntary, with feelings indescribable; and so did his mother, who was also in the Abbey, and who gaped at the fine young woman with a mixture of consternation and admiration, by no means sure of her inferiority, yet feeling that a crisis had arrived, and that whatever Miss Despard might have said before, she could not but be glad now of any offer of an 'ome. Mrs. Purcell did not stay for the voluntary, but went home quickly to see after "her dinner," very full of thought, and tremulous with expectation. The young lady was proud, she would not have anything to say to John before—but now, no doubt she would send for him and all would be settled. The housekeeper knew that a young stepmother was a strong argument against the peace of a girl who had been used to have everything her own way, and she felt with a tremor of her heart, half pride, half pain, that now at last she would have to resign her boy, and see him pass from beyond her ken into those regions of gentility with which the Signor's housekeeper had nothing to do. Very likely John, or John's wife who was "such a lady," would want her to leave her comfortable situation. Mrs. Purcell did not like the idea of it, but still, if it would help to make her boy happy—perhaps even it might remove a stumbling-block out of John's way if she were to take it into her own hands, and give up her situation. The thought made her heart heavy, for she liked her place, and the Signor, and her comfortable rooms, and the power of laying by a little money. But John was the first person to be considered. What could a young lady object to in his position? *he* was all that a gentleman could wish to be; but a mother who was in service might no doubt be an objection. Mrs. Purcell made up her mind hurriedly, that if it proved needful she would not wait to be asked, but would herself take the initiative and make the sacrifice; but she did so with a heavy heart. To give up not only her boy, who, when he was married, would not, she knew, be much more to his mother, but her occupation likewise, and her chief comforts, and her master who was, in a way, like another son to her, a foster-son, much greater and richer than she, but still dependent on her for his comfort—it was hard—but still she could do it for her John's sake. Meanwhile her John, feeling the Signor's hand heavy with meaning on his arm, answered with tremulous excitement, "Yes—I saw it. It is terrible, terrible! a desecration. To think she should have to put up with *that* even for a day!"

"I wonder what will be the issue," said the Signor, meditatively. "Her heart is not in her work now. If she becomes an artist it will be against her will—Art is not what she is thinking of. I wonder what

will come of it. Will she feel the hollowness of this world and throw herself into her profession, or will she——" "Master," said the young musician, fervently, "sooner or later she will turn to me. It is not possible that a man could love a young lady as I do, and have an 'ome to offer her, as I have——"

Purcell was educated—he did not forget his h's in general; but how many people are there who, beguiled by that familiar phrase, forget all precautions, and plunge recklessly into the pitfall of an 'ome!

"You think so?" said the Signor. He did not himself put any confidence in this result, and was even surprised, after his recent experience, that the young man should be sanguine; but still, after all, who ought to have such true intuitions as the hero himself? and there is no telling what perseverance mingled with enthusiasm may do. The Signor was not satisfied with his pupil. She would not devote herself to her work as he wished. She had no abstract devotion to art, as art. The Signor felt, musing over it, that it was possible she might take to it more warmly if by any chance she became Purcell's wife. John was a very good fellow, and when he was disappointed the Signor was very angry with Lottie; but still he thought it probable that Lottie, if she married him, would not find much to satisfy her in Purcell, and therefore would be driven to art. And of all results that could be attained, was not this the best? In the meantime, however, he was very doubtful whether by this means it ever would be attained.

"Yes, master," said the young man; "how can I help thinking so? I can give her, if not very much, at least independence and the comforts of an 'ome. She would not be dragged down by anything about me. My mother's position may be doubtful," he said, with passing embarrassment; "but you have been so good, you have never made her like a common servant; and at Sturminster nobody need ever know."

"Your mother has been very good and done a great deal for you; you must never let anyone ignore your mother."

"Certainly not," said the young man. "She is my mother; that ought to be enough for anybody. And I shall have her come to see me the same as if she were a duchess; but still there is no need of publishing to everybody what she is when she is at home."

"That is true, that is true," said the Signor; "then you really think there is a chance that this is how it will end?"

"Master," said Purcell, pausing at the door before they entered. It was one of the Italian traditions which had lingered in the Signor's habitual bearing, to stand still now and then as he was walking, by way of giving emphasis to a sentence. They paused now, looking at each other before they went in, and the colour came to the young fellow's face. "Master," he said, "it may look self-sufficient—but how can it end otherwise? There is no one else who will offer her what I can offer her; and it would be like saying she had no sense, which is very far from the case, to think she would stand out for ever. She is a lady, she

is above me in birth ; but, thanks to you, I know how to behave like a gentleman ; and surely sooner or later this is how it must end."

"Amen, with all my heart," said the Signor, turning in at the door, which old Pick held open behind, waiting, as one who knew his master's way.

It was Mr. Ashford who had intoned the service that afternoon, and his attention had been so caught by Polly's entrance, that he had made a kind of stumble in the beginning—a pause which was perceptible. After that, during the singing of the anthem and at other moments when his attention was free, he had looked down upon that gorgeous apparition from his high desk with a look of compassion on his face. The compassion, it is needless to say, was not for Polly, who wanted none of it. He watched her behind his book, or behind the hand which supported his head, with the most curious alarmed attention. And when he passed her with her husband going out, Mr. Ashford looked at her in a way which Polly thought to be flattering. "That's one as takes an interest in us," she said. "It's Ashford, the minor canon. It must be you he takes an interest in," whispered the Captain, and Polly laughed and tossed her head. Mr. Ashford went home with the same strange look on his face, softened and touched and pitiful. "Poor thing," he said to himself, "poor girl!" and when he got in he sat for a long time in the centre window in the dark, looking out, and trying to think out some way of help. What could he do for her? Poor thing! with all her better instincts and higher feelings, with her impulse of taking care of everybody and keeping her father and brother right, what would become of her now? Mr. Ashford asked himself with many an anxious thought, what could be done? A man could do nothing—where it was a girl that was in the case, a man was more helpless than a baby. He could do nothing to help her; he could not even show his sympathy, without probably doing more harm than good to the sufferer. He sat in the window-seat, gazing out on the dusk, and the dim horizon, as if they could help him in his musings. If he had only had a mother or sister—any woman to whom he could have appealed, he thought he must have done so on behalf of this girl. But he had neither sister nor mother. He was a man very much alone in the world. He had a brother, a poor clergyman with a large family, and a wife, who would not understand in the least why Ernest should interest himself in a stranger—a girl. If he wanted some one to spend his money upon, why not take one of the children? he thought he heard her say; and certainly she would not understand, much less respond to any appeal he could make to her. What could he do? If any other suggestion swept across Mr. Ashford's face in the dark or through his heart, nobody was there to see or divine it. He sat thus without ringing for his lamp till it was quite late, and was much discomposed to be found sitting in the dark when a messenger arrived with a note from the Deanery about the extra service for the next saint's day. He was annoyed to be found so, being

conscious perhaps of reasons for the vigil which he would not have cared to enter upon : for he was shy and sensitive : and it had often happened to him to be laughed at, because of his undue anxiety about others. What is it to you? had been often said to him, and never with more occasion than now. For, after all, what did it matter to the minor canon, what became of Lottie Despard? Whether she and her step-mother should "get on" together, or if they should never "get on," but yet might manage to live under the same roof, a cat-and-dogish life—what was it to him? One way or other it would not take sixpence out of his pocket, or affect his comfort in any way. But yet he could not get it out of his head. No one in the house had thought of coming to his room to light his lamp, to see that all was in order for him. He was not served with precision as was the Signor, for he was fond of saving his servants trouble, and making excuses for them. And when the man came from the Deanery and followed the maid into the study, where she went groping, declaring that her master was not at home, the minor canon was uncomfortable, finding himself thus taken by surprise. "You need not wait for an answer. I will send one in the morning," he said, when the candles on the writing-table had been lit with a match, and he had read the note. He felt that his confused and troubled thoughts might be read in his eyes. But nobody had any clue to the subject of these thinkings ; and how could any one suspect that it was a matter of such absolute indifference to himself that was occupying his thoughts—a thing with which he had nothing in the world to do?

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHAT ROLLO HAD TO MARRY ON.

THE moment after a man has made a proposal of marriage, and has been accepted, is not always a moment of unmitigated blessedness. There are ups and downs in the whole business from beginning to end. Sometimes the man has the best of it, and sometimes the woman. When either side has betrayed itself without a response on the other, when the man seems to waver in his privilege of choice, when the woman hesitates in her crowning prerogative of acceptance or rejection, then there are intervals on either side which are not enviable ; but when all these preliminaries are over, and the explanation has been made, and the two understand each other—then the lady's position is, for the first few days at least, the most agreeable. She has no parents to interview, no pecuniary investigations to submit to, nor has she to enter upon the question of ways and means, settlements and income for the future. But when a man who knows he has nothing to marry upon is beguiled by circumstances, by a sudden emergency, or by strain of feeling, into the momentous offer, and after the first enthusiasm of acceptance looks himself in the face as it were, and asks himself how it is to be done, there is

something terrible in the hours that follow. How was it to be done? Rollo Ridsdale left Lottie at her door, and went across the road towards the Deanery in a state of mind which was indescribable. He was not an immaculate man, nor had he now spoken of love for the first time; but yet he was real in his love, and the response had been sweet to him, sweet and terrible, as conveying every risk and danger that life could bring, as well as every delight. He had lingered with his love until the last available moment, and yet it was a relief to turn his back upon her, to go away into the chaos of his own life and try to find a way out of this maze in which he had involved himself. How was he to marry? what was he to do? He felt giddy as he walked along, steadily enough to outward seeming, but in his soul groping like a blind man. He had asked Lottie Despard to marry him, and she had consented. He wanted nothing better than her companionship, her love, the delight and comfort of her to be his own; but, good heavens!—but, by Joye!—but, in the name of everything worth swearing by—how was it to be done?—how was he to marry? what was he to do? The happiness was delicious—it was a taste of Paradise, a whiff of Elysium—but—. Rollo did not know where he was going as he crossed the Dean's Walk. He went—steadily enough, his legs carrying him, his knowledge of the place guiding him mechanically, but his whole soul in a maze of thought. How was he to do it? How could he, a man with nothing, not much better than an adventurer, living upon chances and windfalls—how could he weight himself with the support of another—marry a wife? It was preposterous, it was terrible—yet it was sweet. Poor child, she was in want of his arm to shelter her, in want of some one to take care of her; and he could not tolerate the idea that anyone but himself should give her the succour she needed; but how was he to do it? The question seemed to get into the air, and whisper round him—how was he to do it? He had nothing, or what to such a man was nothing, and worse than nothing. He managed to live no one could tell how. True, in living he did not know how, Rollo managed to spend a good deal of money—more than many a family is reared upon: but there is proportion in everything, and he never could tell, from one year's end to another, how he had got through. And he had asked a girl to marry him! He groaned within himself when he came back to this centre thought, this pivot of all his reflections, though it was sweet. He had asked her to marry him; he had pledged himself to take her away out of her troubles, to throw open a refuge to her, to make her escape practicable: speedily, certainly, easily so far as she knew;—and how was he to do it? If the question went through his mind once, it flew and circled in wavering rounds about him, like a moth or a bat in summer, a hundred times at least as he went from the Chevalier's lodge to the Deanery door. He had no time for thinking, since the hour of dinner approached, and the Dean waited for no one; but he thought and thought all the same. What was he to do? He, marry! how was he to do it? Yet it must be done. He did nothing but ask

himself this while he brushed his hair and tied his evening tie. He had nothing, not a penny—he had a valet and a dressing-case, with gold tops to all the bottles, and the most expensive clothes from the dearest tailor—but he had nothing, and everybody knew that he had nothing. The situation was appalling. A cold dew came out on his forehead; he to do such a thing! but yet he had done it—he had committed himself—and now the question that remained was—not how to get out of it, which under any other circumstances would have been his clear duty, but how to do it! This was the problem he tried to solve while he was dressing, which flitted about his head while he sat at dinner, between every mouthful of his soup, and fluttered all through the dessert. How was he to do it? And when the evening was over—when Lady Caroline had gone to bed, and the Dean to his study, Rollo at length ventured out into the Deanery garden with his cigar, in spite of the black looks of Mr. Jeremie, who wanted to shut up the house and get to bed himself at a reasonable hour, as a dean's butler has a right to do.

It was cold—but he did not feel the cold—and the wind was still strong, blowing the black branches wildly about the leaden sky. The Dean's garden was bounded by the Slopes, only a low and massive grey wall, as old as the buttresses amid which the lawn was set, separating it from the larger grounds, which were open to the community—and Rollo leaning on that wall could almost see the spot where he had sat with Lottie, when she had clasped her hands on his arm, leaning upon him with delicious trust, and giving up all her future into his hands. Even then what a difference there had been between them!—she throwing herself upon him in utter faith and confidence, feeling herself delivered completely and at once from all the troubles that overwhelmed her; while he, even in the thrill of pleasure which that soft weight and pressure gave him, felt his heart jump with such sudden alarm as words could not describe. Now when he thought it over, the alarm was more than the pleasure. Lottie, retired into her little chamber, was at that hour going over the whole scene with the tenderest happiness and reliance—feeling safe with him, feeling free of all responsibility, not even forecasting the future, safe and relieved from all the anxieties of the past, caring for nothing but this moment, this exquisite climax of life, this perfect union that had begun and was never to end. Very, very different were Rollo's thoughts. How was he to do it? Marry! the very idea seemed impossible. It involved disclosure, and disclosure would be madness. What would his relations say to him?—what would his friends say to him? His tradesmen would send in their bills, his associates would contemplate him with the very horror of astonishment. Ridsdale married! as well cut his throat at once. Had he ever thought of the little *ménage* on which Lottie's thoughts (had they been free to plan anything) would have dwelt with simple pride and happiness, he would have been disposed really to cut his throat. In such a case Lottie would have been sure of her own powers—sure that if they were poor she could make their money

go twice as far as Rollo by himself could make it go—and could much more than balance her share of the expenses by the housewifely powers which it would have been her delight and her ambition to exercise. But to Rollo love in a cottage was a simple folly, meaning nothing. The very idea was so foreign to him that it never entered into his mind at all. What did enter into his mind as the only hope in the blank of the future, was of a very different description. It was the original idea which had first of all moved him towards this girl, who gradually had awakened within him so many other sentiments: her voice. Should he be able to produce this as he hoped, then there would be a way of escape from the difficulty. The Manager had behaved like a fool, but Rollo had not changed his opinion. Though he had fallen in love with the singer, and his sentiments in regard to her had thus been modified, he had never changed his opinion. She possessed a magnificent organ, and though (which seemed to him very strange) Handel at present was her only inspiration, yet he felt that with proper care that voice could do anything, and that in it might yet lie all the elements of fortune. Casting about around all his horizon, for something like salvation, this was the only light that Rollo perceived. It, perhaps, was not the most desirable of lights. To marry a singer in full heyday of her powers, admired by all the world, and making a great deal of money, was not a thing that any younger son would hesitate to do; but an unknown singer with all her way to make, and her very education still so imperfect, that was a very different matter; but still it was the only chance. In former times, perhaps, a man would have thought it necessary to pretend at least a desire to snatch his bride from the exposure of publicity, from the stage or even from the concert-room—a determination to work for her rather than to let her work for him; but along with circumstances sentiments change, and the desire of women for work is apt to be supported from an undesirable side by those who once would have thought their honour concerned in making women's work unnecessary. In civilisation there can be no advance without its attendant drawback. Mr. Ridsdale had fallen in love, a thing no young man can entirely guard against, and he had engaged to marry Lottie Despard, partly because he was in love with her, partly because she was in want of protection and succour. But he did not know in what way he could keep a wife—and short of breaking his word and abandoning her altogether (things which at this moment it seemed utterly impossible to do), what other way was open to him than to consider how his wife could keep him? This was a great deal more easy. He had nothing—no money, no profession—but she had a profession, a something which was worth a great deal of money, which only required cultivation to be as good as a fortune. Rollo's heart perceptibly lightened as he thought of this. It did not make the social difficulties much easier, or soften the troubles which he must inevitably have with his family; but still, whereas the other matter had been impossible, this brought it within the range of things that

could be contemplated. He could not refrain from one sigh (in the undercurrent of his mind—not dwelt upon or even acknowledged, a thing which he would have been ashamed of had he admitted it to himself)—one sigh that the idea of marriage had come in at all. She might have found in him all the succour, all the companionship, all the support she wanted without *that*; and it would have done her no harm in her after career. But that was a secret thought—an inadvertence, a thing which he dared not permit himself to think, as it were, in the daylight, in his own full knowledge. He knew very well what a fool he would appear to everybody—how the idea that he, Rollo, with all his experience, should be thus taken in at last, would cause infinite surprise and laughter among his friends—but still there came a gleam of possibility into the matter when he thought of Lottie's gift. By that means they might do it. It was not quite out of the question, quite impossible. Rollo had been so lost in thought that he had not seen Mr. Jeremie looking out from the window through which he had gone into the garden; but as he arrived at this, which was a kind of conclusion, if not a very satisfactory one, he became at last aware of the respectable butler's anxiety.

"Her ladyship, sir, don't hold with leaving the windows open," said Mr. Jeremie, who did not hold with staying out of bed to attend upon a young man's vagaries. There had been nothing of this kind in Miss Augusta's time—not even when Mr. Daventry came courting. Rollo tossed the end of his cigar over the wall and came in, somewhat relieved in his mind, though the relief was not very great. It left all the immediate question unsolved, what his family would say, and what was to be done in the meantime—but it gave a feeble light of possibility in the future. He had calculated on Lottie's voice to make his fortune when he thought of it only as a speculator. He had much more right to look upon her as likely to make his fortune now.

In the morning the same thought was the first in Rollo's mind; but the faint light of hope it gave was surrounded by clouds that were full of trouble. Supposing that in the course of time, when she was thoroughly established in her profession, trained and started, she could manage to attain that most necessary thing called an income, with which to meet the world—this was a contingency which still lay in the future; whereas it might be necessary to act at once. The very urgency and anxiety of Rollo's thoughts will show that he neither wanted to abandon Lottie, nor to allow her to guess that he was alarmed by his engagement to her. The whole scope and object of his deliberations was to make the thing possible. But for this why should he have troubled himself about it at all? He might have "let things take their course"—he might have gone on enjoying the delights of love-making, and all a lover's privileges, without going any further. Lottie was not the kind of girl who ever would have hurried matters, or insisted upon the engagement being kept. He knew well enough that she would never "pull him up." But he was

in love with Lottie—he wanted to deliver her from her troubles—he wanted to have her for his own—if he could only see how it was to be done. Evidently there were various conditions which must be insisted on—which Lottie must yield to. Public notice must not be called to the tie between them more than was absolutely necessary. Everything must be conducted carefully and privately—not to make any scandal—and not to compel the attention of his noble family. Rollo did not want to be sent for by his father, to be remonstrated with by his elder brother, to have all his relatives preaching sermons to him. Even his aunt Caroline, passive, easy-going soul—even she would be roused, he felt, to violence, could she divine what was in the air. Marry Miss Despard! the idea would drive her out of all the senses she possessed. Kind as she was, and calm as she was, Rollo felt that in such circumstances she would no longer be either kind or calm—and if even Lady Caroline were driven to bay, what would be the effect of such a step on Lord Courtland, who had no calm of nature with which to meet the revelation? Therefore his heart was heavy as he went out, as soon as the bells had ceased ringing for matins, to meet his love on the Slopes. His heart was heavy, yet he was not a cool or indifferent lover. The thought of seeing her again was sweet to him; but the cares were many, and he did not know how to put into language which would not vex or hurt her, the things that must be said. He tried to wrap them up in honeyed words, but he was not very successful—and at last he decided to leave it all to Providence—to take no thought for what he was to say. The words will be put into my mouth at the right time, he said to himself, piously. He could not exactly forecast what shape the conversation might take, or how this special subject should be introduced. He would not settle what he had to say, but would leave it to fate.

The morning sunshine lay as usual unbroken upon the Dean's Walk. It had been feeble and fitful in the morning, as sunshine has often begun to be in October, but now had warmed into riper glory. The paths on the Slopes were strewed with fallen leaves, which the winds of last night had blown about in clouds. Rollo was first at the trysting-place, and when he saw Lottie appear suddenly round the bole of the big elm-tree, she seemed to be walking to him, her foot all light and noiseless, upon a path of gold. Her steps seemed to have a fairy tinkle upon that yellow pavement. The movement of her figure was like music, with a flowing liquid measure in it. The little veil that dropped over her hat, the ribbons at her neck, the soft sweep of her dark merino gown, commonest yet prettiest of fabrics, all united in one soft line. There was nobody by, and it was the first heavenly morning upon which they had belonged to each other. She came to him as if out of paradise, out of heaven, all radiant with happiness and celestial trust and love. A glow of tenderness and gladness came over the young man. He forgot all about the difficulties, about money, about his family, about how they were to live and what was to be done. He went to meet her, ardent

and eager, forgetting everything but herself. It was the *vita nuova* all over again, a new earth and new skies. It seemed to both of them that they had never lived before, that this was the birthday of a glorified existence. Even last night, in the agitation of their happiness, had not been like this first new day. When they stepped into each other's sight, realising the mutual property, the mutual right, the incomprehensible sweetness of belonging to each other, everything else seemed to be swept out of the world. There was nothing visible but themselves, the sweet sky, and genial air: the leaves dropping softly, all crimson and golden, the sun shining on them with a sympathetic surprise of pleasure. For the moment, even to the young man of the world, everything was simple, primitive, and true, all complication and conventionalities swept away; and if so to Rollo, how much more to Lottie, thus advancing sweetly, with a soft measure in her step, not hurried or eager, but in modest faith and innocence, into her lover's arms.

And lo! in a moment all his calculations proved needless. Instead of talking seriously to each other, making their mutual arrangements, deciding what was to be done, as would have been far the wisest way of employing the solitude of this sweet morning, which seemed to brighten expressly for them—what did the two do, but fall into an aimless delicious whispering about their two happy selves, and nothing more! They had things to say to each other which came by stress of nature, and had to be said, yet were nothing—while the things of real importance were thrust aside. They fell a-gossiping about themselves, about each other, going over all the old ground, repeating the last evening's tender follies, about—when you first began to think—and when I first knew—and what had been in the one heart and in the other, when both had to talk of other things, and make no sign. What need to follow all the course of that foolishness? There was nothing in earth or heaven so deeply interesting to Lottie as to hear how Rollo was thinking of her while he stood and talked to somebody else, watching her from far; and how his heart would beat when he saw her coming, and how he blasphemed old Captain Temple, yet blessed him next moment for bringing her here; and what he had really meant when he said this and that, which had perplexed her at the time; nor to Rollo than to know how she had watched for him, and looked for his sympathy, and felt herself backed up and supported the moment he appeared. There was not a day of the past month but had its secret history, which each longed to disclose to the other—and scarcely an hour, scarcely a scrap of conversation which did not contain a world of unrevealed meaning to be unfolded and interpreted. Talk of an hour! they had ample enough material for a century without being exhausted; and as for arrangements, as for the (so to speak) business of the matter, who thought of it? For Lottie was not an intelligent young woman, intending to be married, but a happy girl in love; and Rollo, though he knew better, was in love too, and wished for nothing better than these delightful confidences. The hours went by

like a moment. They had already been aroused two or three times by the roll of baby carriages propelled by nursemaids before the greater volume of music from the Abbey proclaimed that service was over. "Already!" they both cried, with wonder and dismay; and then, for the first time, there was a pause.

"I had so much to talk to you about," he said, "and we have not had time to say a word, have we? Ah! when can we have a good long time to ourselves? Can you escape your Captain to-night, my darling? I should like to shake him by the hand, to thank him for taking care of you; but couldn't you escape from him, my Lottie, to-night?"

Lottie grew a little pale; her heart sank, not with distrust, but with perhaps a little, a very little disappointment. Was this still how it was to be? Just the same anxious diplomacies to secure a meeting, the same risks and chances? This gave her a momentary chill. "It is very difficult," she said. "He is the only one I have to take care of. He would think it unkind."

"You must not say now the only one, my Lottie—not the only one—my substitute for a little while, who will soon have to give me up his place."

"But he will not like to give it up now; not till he knows; perhaps not even then—for his daughter, you know—"

"Ah! it was she who married Dropmore. Lottie, my love, my darling, I cannot live through the evening without you. Could you not come again, at the same time as last night? It is early dark, heaven be praised. Take your walk with him, and then give him the slip, and come here, sweet, here to me. I shall be watching, counting the moments. It is bad enough to be obliged to get through the day without you. Ah! it is the Signor's day. The Signor is all rapt up in his music. He will never suspect anything. I shall be able to see you at least, to hear you, to look at you, my lovely darling—"

After a moment, said Lottie, "That was one thing I wanted to ask you about. You know why the Signor gives me lessons. Will it be right *now* to go on with him? *now* that everything is changed? Should not I give them up?"

"Give them up!" cried Rollo, with a look of dismay. "My darling, what are you thinking of? They are more necessary, more important than ever. Of course, we will pay for them after. Oh, no fear but he will be repaid; but no, no, my love, my sweet, you must not give them up!"

She looked at him with something like anxiety in her eyes, not knowing what he could mean. What was it? Lottie could not but feel a little disappointed. It seemed that everything was to go on just the same as before.

"I shall see you there," he said; "so long as we are in the same place everything is sweet; and I have always taken so much interest in your dear voice that no one can suspect. And to-night you will come—promise me, my darling—just after the service, when it is getting dark?"

"Yes," she whispered, with a sigh—then started from his side. "I

saw some one among the trees. The old Chevaliers are coming up for their morning walk. Let me go now—you must let me go—Mr. Ridsdale—”

“ Mr. Ridsdale ! How can I let my Lottie go before she has called me by my right name ? ”

“ Oh, I must not stay. I see people coming,” said Lottie, disappointed, troubled, afraid of being seen, yet angry with herself for being afraid. “ Mr. Ridsdale—Rollo, dear Rollo—let me go now—”

“ Till it is time for the Signor—” And he did let her go, with a hasty withdrawal on his own part, for unmistakably there were people to be seen moving about among the trees, not indeed coming near their corner, yet within sight of them. Lottie left him hurriedly, not looking back. She was ashamed, though she had no cause for shame. She ran down the bank to the little path which led to the foot of the hill, and to the town. She could not go up and run the risk of being seen going home by the Dean’s Walk. She drew her veil over her face, and her cheeks burned with blushes : she was ashamed, though she had done no wrong. And Rollo stood looking down after her, watching her with a still more acute pang. There were things which were very painful to him, which did not affect her. That a girl like Lottie should go away alone, unattended, and walk through the street, with no one with her, a long round, annoyed him beyond measure. He ought to have gone with her, or some one ought to be with her. But then what could he do ? He might as well give up the whole matter at once as betray all he was meditating to his people in this way. But he watched her, leaning over the low parapet, with trouble and shame. The girl whom he loved ought not to go about unattended, and this relic of chivalry, fallen into conventionality, moved him more than greater things. He did not object, like Ferdinand, to let his Miranda carry his load for him ; but it did trouble him that she should walk through St. Michael’s by herself, though in the sweet security of the honest morning. Thus minds differ all over the world.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LOTTIE’S SIDE OF THE QUESTION.

LOTTIE made her way down the slopes alone, with feelings which had greatly changed from those of a few minutes ago. How happy she had been ! The hour that had passed under the falling leaves had been like paradise ; but the portals of exit from paradise are perhaps never so sweet as those of entrance. Her coming away was with a sense of humiliation and shame. As she wound her way down her favourite by-road winding among the shrubs and trees, she could not help feeling that she was making her escape, as if from some guilty meeting, some clandestine rendezvous. In all her life Lottie had never known this sensa-

tion before. She had been shy, and had shrunk from the gaze of people who had stared at her, in admiration of her beauty or of her singing, but in her shyness there had always been the pride of innocence; and never before had she been afraid to meet any eye, or felt it necessary to steal away, to keep out of sight as if she were guilty. She had not done anything wrong, but yet she had all the feeling of having done something wrong—the desire to escape, the horror of detection. To some the secret meeting, the romance and mystery, would have been only an additional happiness, but Lottie, proud and frank and open-hearted, could not bear the very thought of doing anything of which she was ashamed. The sensation hurt and humiliated her. All had been very different *before*: to meet her lover unawares, yet not without intention, with a delightful element of chance in each encounter—to look out secretly for him, yet wonder innocently to find him—to let her steps be drawn here or there by a sense of his presence, with a fond pretence of avoiding him, a sweet certainty of meeting him—all these risks and hazards of emotion had been natural. But Lottie felt with a sudden jar of her nerves and mind that this ought not to continue so. She had felt a little wondering disappointment on the previous night when he had asked her to meet him again, without any suggestion that he should go to her, or make the new bond between them known. Even then there had been a faint jar, a sigh of unfulfilled expectation. But now their hurried parting, her own flight, the little panic lest they should be seen, and discovery follow, made Lottie's heart sick. How well she could imagine how this ought to have been! They ought not to have fled from each other or been afraid of any man's eye. It ought not to have mattered whether the Signor or any one suspected. Blushing and shy, yet with full faith in the sympathy of all who saw her, Lottie should have walked down the Dean's Walk with her betrothed: she should have avoided no one. She should have been shame-faced but not ashamed. What a difference between the two! all the difference that there is between the soft blush of happiness and the miserable burning of guilt. And this was what ought to have been. Half the misery of Lottie—as half the misery of all imaginative inexperienced women—arose from the pain and disappointment of feeling that those she loved did not come up to the ideal standard she had set up in her soul. She was disappointed, not so much because of the false position in which she herself was placed (for this, except instinctively, she had but little realised), but because Rollo was not doing, not yet, all that it seemed right for him to do. She would have forced and beaten (had she been able) Law into the fulfilment of his duty, she would even have made him generous to herself, not for the sake of herself, but that he should be a model of brotherhood, an example of all a true man ought to be; and if this was so in the case of her brother, how much more with her lover? If to be harsh as a tyrant or indifferent as a sultan, was the highest ideal of a man's conduct, how much happier many a poor creature would be! It seems a paradox to say so, but it is

true enough ; for the worst of all, in a woman's mind, is to feel that the wrong done to *her* is worse wrong to *him*, an infringement of the glory of the being whom she would fain see perfect. This, however, is a mystery beyond the comprehension of the crowd. Lottie was used to being disappointed with Law—was she fated to another disappointment more cruel and bitter ? She did not ask herself the question, she would not have thought it even, much less said it for all the world ; but secretly there was a wonder, a pang, a faintness of failure in her heart.

It is not without an effort, however, that the heart will permanently admit any such disappointment. As Lottie went her way thus drooping, ashamed and discouraged, thinking of everything that had been done and that ought to have been done, there drifted vaguely across her mind a kind of picture of Rollo's meeting with her father, and what it would be. She had no sooner thought of this than a glow of alarm came over her face, bringing insensibly consolation to her mind. Rollo and her father ! What would the Captain say to him ? He would put on his grand air, in which even Lottie had no faith ; he would exhibit himself in all his vain greatness, in all his self-importance, jaunty and fine, to his future son-in-law. He would give Lottie herself a word of commendation in passing, and he would spread himself forth before the stranger as if it was he whom Rollo wanted and cared for. Lottie's steps quickened out of the languid pace into which they had fallen, and her very forehead grew crimson as she realised that meeting. Thank heaven, it had not taken place yet ! Rollo had been too wise, too kind, too delicate to humble his love by hurrying into the presence of the Captain, into the house where the Captain's new wife now reigned supreme. The new wife—she too would have a share in it, she would be called into counsel, she would give her advice in everything, and claim a right to interfere. Oh, Lottie thought, how foolish she had been ! how much wiser was Rollo, no doubt casting about in his mind how it was best to be done, and pondering over it carefully to spare her pain. She felt herself enveloped in one blush from the crown of her head to the sole of her feet ; but how sweet was that shame ! It was she who was foolish, not he who had failed. Her cheeks burned with a penitential flush, but he was faultless. There was nothing in him to disappoint, but only the most delicate kindness, the tenderest care of her. How could she have thought otherwise ? It was not possible that Rollo should like secret meetings, should fear discovery. In the first days of their acquaintance he had shown no reluctance to come to the humble little lodge. But now—his finer feeling shrank from it now—he wanted to take his love away from that desecrated place, not to shame her by prying into its ignoble mysteries. He was wiser, better, kinder than anyone. And she was ashamed of *herself*, not any longer of anything else, ashamed of her poor, mean, unworthy interpretation of him ; and as happy in her new, changed consciousness of guilt, and penitence and self-disgust—as happy as if, after her downfall into earth, she had now safely got back into heaven.

By this time she had got out of the wooded Slopes, and over the stile, and into the steep thoroughfare at the foot of the Abbey walls, the pavement of St. Michael's Hill. Lottie did not feel that there was any harm in walking through the street alone, as Rollo thought there was. She wanted no attendant. A little bodyguard, invisible, but with a radiance going out from them which shone about her, attended upon her way—love and innocence and happiness, no longer with drooping heads but brave and sweet, a band invisible, guaranteeing their charge against all ills. As she went along the street with this shining retinue, there was nothing in all the world that could have harmed her; and nobody wanted to harm the girl—of whom, but that she was proud, no soul in St. Michael's had an unkind word to say. Everybody knew the domestic trouble that had come upon her, and all the town was sorry for Lottie—all the more that there was perhaps a human satisfaction in being sorry for one whose fault was that she was proud. She met Captain Temple as she entered the Abbey Gate. Many thoughts about her had been in the kind old man's heart all the morning, and it was partly to look for her, after vain walks about the Abbey Precincts, that he was turning his steps towards the town. He came up to her eagerly, taking her hand between his. He thought she must have been wandering out disconsolate, no matter where, to get away from the house which was no longer a fit home for one like her. He was so disturbed and anxious about her, that the shadow which was in his mind seemed to darken over Lottie, and cast a reflection of gloom upon her face. "You have been out early, my dear? Why did you not send for me to go with you? After matins I am always at your service," he said.

But there was none of the gloom which Captain Temple imagined in Lottie's face. She looked up at him out of the soft mist of her own musings with a smile. "I went out before matins," she said; "I have been out a long time. I had—something to do."

"My poor child! I fear you have been wandering, keeping out of the way," said the old Captain. Then another thought seized him. Had she begun already to serve the new wife and do her errands? "My dear," he said, "what have you been doing? you must not be too good—you must not forget yourself too much. Your duty to your father is one thing, but you must not let yourself be made use of now—you must recollect your own position, my dear."

"My position?" she looked up at him bewildered; for she was thinking only of Rollo, while he thought only of her father's wife.

"Yes, Lottie, my dear child, you have thought only of your duty hitherto, but you must not yield to every encroachment. You must not allow it to be supposed that you give up everything."

"Ah," said Lottie, lifting to him eyes which seemed to swim in a haze of light; "to give up everything would be so—I don't know what you mean," she added hastily, in a half terrified tone. As for Captain Temple, he was quite bewildered, and did not know what to think.

"Need I explain, my dear, what I mean? There can be but one thing that all your friends are thinking of. This new relation, this new connection. I could not sleep all night for thinking of you, in the house with that woman. My poor child! and my wife too. You were the last thing we talked of at night, the first in the morning——"

"Ah," said Lottie again, coming back to reality with a long-drawn breath. "I was not thinking of her; but I understand you now."

Lottie had, however, some difficulty in thinking of *her*, even now; for one moment, being thus recalled to the idea, her countenance changed; but soon came back to its original expression. Her eyes were dewy and sweet—a suspicion of tears in them like the morning dew on flowers with the sunshine reflected in it, the long eyelashes moist, but the blue beneath as clear as a summer sky; and the corners of her mouth would run into curves of smiling unawares; her face was not the face of one upon whom the cares of the world were lying heavy, but of one to whom some new happiness had come. She was not thinking of what he was saying, but of something in her own mind. The kind old Captain could not tell what to think; he was alarmed, though he did not know why.

"Then it is not so bad," he said, "as you feared?"

"What is not so bad? Things at home? Oh, Captain Temple! But I try not to think about it," Lottie said hastily, with a quiver in her lip. She looked at him wistfully, with a sudden longing. "I wish—I wish—but it is better not to say anything."

"You may trust to me, my dear; whatever is in your heart I will never betray you; you may trust to me."

Lottie's eyes filled with tears as she looked at him, but she shook her head. They were not bitter tears, only a little bitter-sweet of happiness that wanted expression, but which she dared not reveal. If she could but have told him! If Rollo, failing her father, would but come and speak to this kind and true friend! But she shook her head. She was no longer free to say and do whatever pleased her out of her own heart. She must think of *him*; and while he did not speak, what could she say? She put out her hand to her old friend again with a little sudden artifice unlike Lottie. "I have been out all the morning," she said; "I must make haste and get back now."

"I am very glad you are not unhappy," said the old Captain, looking at her regretfully. He was not quite sincere. To tell the truth it gave him a shock to find that Lottie was not unhappy; how could she put up with such a companion, with such a fate? He went in to his wife, who had been watching furtively at the window while this conversation was going on, to talk it all over. Mrs. Temple was almost glad to find something below perfection in the girl about whom secretly she thought as much as her husband talked. "We have been thinking too much about it," she said; "if she can find the stepmother congenial, it will be better for her."

"Congenial! you are talking folly. How could she be congenial!"

tried Captain Temple, with great heat, but he did not know what to make of it. He was disappointed in Lottie. When he had met her the day before she had been quivering with pain and shame, revolted and outraged, as it was right and natural she should be: but now it seemed to have passed altogether from her mind. He could not make it out. He was disappointed; he went on talking of this wonder all day long and shaking his white head.

As for Lottie, when she went home, she passed through the house, light and silent as a ghost, to her own little room, where, abstracted from everything else, she could live in the new little world of her own which had come out of the mists into such sudden and beautiful life. It was very unlike Lottie, but what more does the young soul want when the *vita nuova* has just begun, but such a possibility of self-abstraction and freedom to pursue its dreams? Rapt in these, she gave up her occupation, her charge, without a sigh. When she was called to table she came quite gently, and took no notice of anything that passed there, having enough in her own mind to keep her busy. Law was as much astonished as Captain Temple. He had thought that Lottie would not endure it for a day; but, thanks to that happy pre-occupation, Lottie sailed serenely through these troubled waters for more than a week, during which she spent a considerable portion of her time on'the Slopes, though the weather grew colder and colder every day, and the rest in her own room, in which she sat fireless, doing her accustomed needlework, her darnings and mendings, mechanically, while Polly remodelled the drawing-room, covering it up with crocheted antimacassars, and all the cheap and coarse devices of vulgar upholstery. While this was going on, she too was content to have Lottie out of the way. Polly pervaded the house with high-pitched voice and noisy step; and she filled it with savoury odours, giving the two men hot suppers, instead of poor Lottie's cold beef, which they had often found monotonous. The Captain now came in for this meal, which in former times he had rarely favoured; he spent the evenings chiefly at home, having not yet dropped out of the fervour of the honeymoon; and on the whole even Law was not sure that there was not something to be said for the new administration of the house. There was no cold beef—that was an improvement patent to the meanest capacity. As for Polly, nothing had yet occurred to mar her glory and happiness. She wore her blue silk every day, she walked gloriously about the streets in her orange-blossoms, pointed out by everybody as one of the ladies of the Abbey. She went to the afternoon service and sat in her privileged seat, and looked down with dignified sweetness upon "the girls" who were as she once was. She felt herself as a goddess, sitting there in the elevated place to which she had a right, and it seemed to her that to be a Chevalier's wife was as grand as to be a princess. But Polly did not soil her lips with so vulgar a word as wife. She called herself a Chevalier's lady, and her opinion of her class was great. "Chevalier means the same thing as knight, and, instead of being simple missis, I am sure we should

all be My lady," Polly said, "if we had our rights." Even her husband laughed, but this did not change her opinion. It was ungrateful of the other Chevaliers' ladies that they took no notice of this new champion of their order. But for the moment Polly, in the elation of her success, did not mind this, and was content to wait for the recognition which sooner or later she felt would be sure to come.

This elation kept her from interfering with Lottie, whose self-absorbed life in her own room, and her exits and entrances, Mrs. Despard tolerated and seemed to accept as natural; she had so many things to occupy and to please her, that she could afford to let her step-daughter alone. And thus Lottie pursued for a little time that life out of nature to which she had been driven. She lived in those moments on the Slopes, and in the hours she spent at the Signor's piano, singing; and then brooded over these intervals of life in the silence. Her lessons had increased to three in the week, and these hours of so-called study were each like a drama of intense and curious interest. Rollo was always there—a fact which he explained to the Signor by his professional interest in the new singer, and which to Lottie required no explanation; and there too was her humble lover, young Purcell, who as she grew familiar with the sight of him, and showed no displeasure at his appearance, grew daily a little more courageous, sometimes daring to turn the leaves of the music, and even to speak to her. Mrs. O'Shaughnessy, who sat by, watching them all with lively but not extravagant interest, was the only one in the little party who was not more or less excited. As for Lottie, this lesson was the centre of all her life. If music be the food of love, love was the very inspiration of music to her; the two re-acted upon each other, raising her to such a height of primitive heroic passion as nobody near her divined—as nobody, indeed, except perhaps the Signor, with his Italian susceptibility, was capable of divining. He saw indeed with dissatisfaction, with an interest which was almost angry, that it was not art that moved her, and that the secret of the astonishing progress she made, was not in his instructions. What was it? The Signor was angry, for he felt no certainty that this wonderful progress was real. Something made her sing like an angel. What was it? not art. The natural qualities of her voice were not to be gainsayed; but the musician felt that the training under which she seemed to be advancing visibly, was all fictitious, and that it was something else that inspired her. But Rollo had no such enlightenment. He remarked with all the technicality of an amateur how her high notes gained in clearness, and her low notes in melody, at every new effort. It was wonderful; but then the Signor was a wonderful teacher, a wonderful accompanist, and what so natural as that a creature of genius like this, should grow under his teaching like a flower? Though it was to him she sang, and though her love for him was her inspiration, Rollo was as unaware of this as old Pickering in the hall, who listened and shook his head, and decided in his heart that a woman with a voice like that was a deal too grand for Mr. John. "She's more

like Jenny Lind than anything," old Pick said ; and in this Mr. Ridsdale agreed, as he sat and listened, and thought over the means which should be employed to secure her success. As for young Purcell, he stood entranced and turned over the leaves of the music. Should he ever dare to speak to her again, to offer her his love, as he had once ventured to do, —she who seemed born to enthral the whole world ? But then, the young fellow thought, who was there but he who had an 'ome to offer Lottie ? He was the nobler of the two between whom she stood, the two men who loved her ; all his thought was, that she being unhappy, poor, her father's house made wretched to her, he had an 'ome to offer her ; whereas Rollo thought of nothing but of the success she must achieve in which he would have his share. In order to achieve that success Rollo had no mind to lend her even his name ; but the idea that it was a thing certain, comforted him much in the consciousness of his own imprudent engagement, and gave a kind of sanction to his love. To marry a woman with such a faculty for earning money could not be called entirely imprudent. These were the calculations, generous and the reverse, which were made about her. Only Lottie herself made no calculations, but sang out of the fulness of her heart, and the delicate passion that possessed her ; and the Signor stood and watched, dissatisfied, sympathetic, the only one that understood at all, though he but poorly, the high emotion and spring-tide of life which produced that flood of song.

In this highly-strained unnatural way, life went on amid this little group of people, few of whom were conscious of any volcano under their feet. It went on day by day, and they neither perceived the gathering rapidity of movement in the events, nor any other sign that to-day should not be as yesterday. Shortly after the explanation had taken place between Rollo and Lottie, Augusta Huntington, now Mrs. Daventry, arrived upon her first visit home. She was the Dean's only child, and naturally every honour was done to her. All the country round, every one that was of sufficient importance to meet the Dean's daughter, was invited to hail her return. The Dean himself took the matter in hand to see that no one was overlooked. They would all like, he thought, to see Augusta, the princess royal of the reigning house ; and Augusta was graciously pleased to like it too. One of these entertainments ended in a great musical party, to which all who had known Miss Huntington, all the singers in the madrigals and choruses of which she had been so fond, were asked. When Lottie's invitation came, there was a great thrill and commotion in Captain Despard's house. Lottie did not even suspect the feeling which had been roused on the subject when she took out her white muslin dress, now, alas, no longer so fresh as at first, and inspected it anxiously. It would do still with judicious ironing, but what must she do for ornaments, now that roses were no longer to be had ? This troubled Lottie's mind greatly, though it may be thought a frivolous question, until a few hours before the time, when two different presents came for her, of flowers : one being a large and elaborate bouquet, the

other a bunch of late roses, delicate, lovely, half opened buds, which could only have come out of some conservatory. One of these was from Rollo, and who could doubt which it was? Who but he would have remembered her sole decoration, and found for her in winter those ornaments of June? What did she care who sent the other? she decked herself with her roses, in a glow of grateful tenderness, as proud as she was happy, to find herself thus provided by his delicate care and forethought. It did not even occur to Lottie to notice the dark looks that were thrown at her as she came downstairs all white and shining, and was wrapped by Law (always ostentatiously attentive to his sister in Polly's presence) in the borrowed glory of Mrs. O'Shaughnessy's great Indian shawl.

The party was large and crowded, and Lottie, all alone in it, was frightened and confused at first; but they were all very kind to her, she thought. Lady Caroline said, "How do you do, Miss Despard?" with something like a smile, and looked as if she might have given Lottie her hand, had not the girl been afraid; and Augusta, when she found her out, came forward with a welcome which was almost effusive. "I hear you have improved so much," she said, taking in at one glance all the particulars of Lottie's appearance, with a wondering question within herself where the roses came from, though she perceived at once that it was the same white muslin frock. And when Lottie sang, which the Signor managed she should do with great effect towards the close of the evening, Augusta rushed to her with great eyes of astonishment. "Where did you get all that voice," she cried; "you did not have that voice when I went away." "I flatter myself it was I that found Miss Despard out," said Rollo, suffering himself to look at her, which hitherto he had only done when there was a shield of crowding groups between him and his cousin. Before this he had managed to make the evening sweet to Lottie by many a whispered word: but when he looked at her now, unawares, under Augusta's very eyes, with that fond look of proprietorship which is so unmistakable by the experienced, and to which Lottie responded shyly by a smile and blush, and conscious tremor of happiness, neither of them knew what a fatal moment it was. Augusta, looking on, suddenly woke up to the meaning of it, the meaning of Rollo's long stay at the Deanery, and various other wonders. She gave the pair but one look, and then she turned away. But Lottie did not see that anything strange had happened. She was so happy that even when Rollo too left her, her heart was touched and consoled by the kindly looks of the people whom she knew in the crowd, the ladies who had heard her sing before at the Deanery, and who were gracious to her, and Mr. Ashford who kept by her side and watched over her—"like a father," Lottie said to herself, with affectionate gratitude, such as might have become that impossible relationship. The minor canon did not leave her for the rest of the evening, and he it was who saw her home, waiting till the door was opened, and pressing kindly her trembling cold hand: for, she

could not tell how, the end of the evening was depressing and discouraging, and the pleasure went all out of it when Rollo whispered to her in passing, "Take care, for heaven's sake, or Augusta will find us out!" Why should it matter so much to him that Augusta should find it out? Was not she more to him than Augusta? Lottie shrank within herself and trembled with a nervous chill. She was half grateful to, half angry with even Mr. Ashford. Why should he be so much more kind to her, so much more careful of her than the man who had promised her his love and perpetual care?

But even now when she stole in, shivering with the cold of disappointment and discouragement, through the dark house to her room Lottie did not know all that this evening had wrought. And she scarcely noticed the gloom on Polly's face, nor the strain of angry monologue which her father's wife gave vent to, next morning. Polly wondered what was the good of being a married lady, when a young unmarried girl that was nobody, was took such notice of, and her betters left at 'ome? Did people know no manners? gentlefolks! they called themselves gentlefolks, and behaved like that? If that was politeness, Polly thanked heaven it was not the kind as she had been taught. But the outburst came when Lottie, taking no notice, scarcely even hearing what was said, showed herself with her music in her hands going out to her lesson. Polly came out of her husband's room and planted herself defiantly in Lottie's way. "Where are you going again," she said, "Miss? where are you going again? is this to be always the way of it? Do you mean never to stay at home nor do anything to help nor make yourself agreeable? I declare it is enough to put a saint in a passion. But I won't put up with it, I can tell you. I did not come here to be treated like this, like the dirt under your feet."

Lottie was almost too much taken by surprise to speak. It was the first absolute shock of collision. "I am going for my lesson," she said.

"Your lesson," cried Polly. "Oh my patience, oh my poor 'usband! that is the way his money goes—lessons for you and lessons for Law, and I don't know what! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, you two. You ought to be making your living both of you, if you were honest, instead of living on your father as wants all he's got for himself. But you shan't go to any lesson if I can help it," she cried. "You'll stay at home and try and be of a little use, or you'll march off this very day, and find some one else to put up with you and your lessons. It shan't be me. I won't stand by and see my 'usband wronged. You'll ruin him between you, that's what you'll do; go back, Miss, and put down them books this moment. I won't have it, I tell you. I'll not see my 'usband eaten up by the likes of you."

Polly's diction suffered from her passion, and so did her appearance. Her face grew scarlet, her eyes flashed with fury. She put out her hand to push Lottie back, who shrank from her with a cry of dismay—

"Let me pass, please," said Lottie piteously. She could not quarrel

with this woman, she could not even enter so much into conflict with her as to brush past her, and thus escape. She shrank with pain and horror from the excited creature in her way.

"It's you that will have to go back," said Polly, "not me. I'm the mistress of this house, you'll please to recollect, Miss Lottie. Your father's been a deal too good, he's let you do just what you pleased, but that's not my style. I begins as I mean to end. You shan't stay here, I tell you, whatever you may think, if you want to trample upon me, and eat up every penny he has. Go and take off your things this moment, and see if you can't be a little use in the house."

Lottie was struck dumb and could not tell what to say. She had not been cared for much in her life, but she had never been restrained, and the sensation was new to her. She did not know how to reply. "I do not wish to be in your way," she cried. "I shall not stay long nor trouble you long, but please do not interfere with me while I am here. I must go."

"And I say you shan't go!" said Polly, raising her voice after the manner of her kind, and stamping her foot on the floor. "If you disobey me, I won't have you here not another day. I'll turn you out if it was twelve o'clock at night. I'll show you that I am mistress in my own house. Do you think I'm going to be out-faced by you, and treated like the dirt below your feet? Go and take off your things this moment, and try if you can't settle to a bit of work. Out of this house you shan't go, not a single step."

"I say, stand out of the way," said Law; he had come out of the dining-room with his hands in his pockets, having just finished his dinner. Law was not easily moved, but he had now made up his mind that he was on Lottie's side. "Don't give yourself airs to her. She is not of your sort," he said. "The governor may let you do many things, but not bully her. Look here, Polly, you'd better stand out of her way."

"And who are you, you lazy useless lout, that dares to call me Polly!" she cried. "Polly, indeed! your father's wife, and far better than you. I'll make him put you to the door, too, you idle low fellow, spending your time with a pack of silly, dressing, useless girls——"

"I say, stop that," cried Law, growing red and seizing her suddenly by the arm; he stood upon no ceremony with Polly, though she was his father's wife; but he gave an uneasy alarmed glance at Lottie. "There's some one waiting for you outside," he cried. "Lottie, go."

She did not wait for any more. Trembling and horrified, she ran past and got out breathless, hastily closing the door behind her. The door had been open, and Mrs. O'Shaughnessy outside—drawing her skirts round her, physically and metaphorically, so as to avoid all pollution, yet listening to everything she could hear, was walking up and down the pavement. "Me poor child!" the good Irishwoman said, half sorry, half delighted to hear the first of the scandal. "Already! has it come to this! Me heart is sore for ye, Lottie me dear!"

most likely to come to matrimony a silvery and frail maiden from the land of the sun, "possessing so ethereal loveliness and such a winsome exquisiteness of mien." All the world over, no one else is likely to come to matrimony a silvery and frail maiden from the land of the sun, "possessing so ethereal loveliness and such a winsome exquisiteness of mien." I am afraid it has been impossible to find a single girl in the world who has the same qualities as the girl in the picture.

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No. XIX.—LANDOR'S IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS.

WHEN Mr. Forster brought out the collected edition of Landor's works, the critics were generally embarrassed. They evaded for the most part any committal of themselves to an estimate of their author's merits, and were generally content to say that we might now look forward to a definitive judgment in the ultimate court of literary appeal. Such an attitude of suspense was natural enough. Landor is perhaps the most striking instance in modern literature of a radical divergence of opinion between the connoisseurs and the mass of readers. The general public have never been induced to read him, in spite of the lavish applause of some self-constituted authorities. One may go further. It is doubtful whether those who aspire to a finer literary palate than is possessed by the vulgar herd are really so keenly appreciative as the innocent reader of published remarks might suppose. Hypocrisy in matters of taste—whether of the literal or metaphorical kind—is the commonest of vices. There are vintages, both material and intellectual, which are more frequently praised than heartily enjoyed. I have heard very good judges whisper in private that they have found Landor dull; and the rare citations made from his works often betray a very perfunctory study of them. Not long ago, for example, an able critic quoted a passage from one of the *Imaginary Conversations* to prove that Landor admired Milton's prose, adding the remark that it might probably be taken as an expression of his real sentiments, although put in the mouth of a dramatic person. To any one who has read Landor with ordinary attention, it seems as absurd to speak in this hypothetical manner as it would be to infer from some incidental allusion that Mr. Ruskin admires Turner. Landor's adoration for Milton is one of the most conspicuous of his critical propensities. There are, of course, many eulogies upon Landor of undeniable weight. They are hearty, genuine, and from competent judges. Yet the enthusiasm of such admirable critics as Mr. Emerson and Mr. Lowell may be carped at by some who fancy that every American enjoys a peculiar sense of complacency when rescuing an English genius from the neglect of his own countrymen. If Mr. Browning and Mr. Swinburne have been conspicuous in their admiration, it might be urged that neither of them has too strong desire to keep to that beaten high road of the commonplace, beyond which even the best guides meet with pitfalls. Southey's praises of Landor were sincere and emphatic;

but it must be added that they provoke a recollection of one of Johnson's shrewd remarks. "The reciprocal civility of authors," says the Doctor, "is one of the most risible scenes in the farce of life." One forgives poor Southey indeed for the vanity which enabled him to bear up so bravely against anxiety and repeated disappointment; and if both he and Landor found that "reciprocal civility" helped them to bear the disregard of contemporaries, one would not judge them harshly. It was simply a tacit agreement to throw their harmless vanity into a common stock. Of Mr. Forster, Landor's faithful friend and admirer, one can only say that in his writing about Landor, as upon other topics, we are distracted between the respect due to his strong feeling for the excellent in literature, and the undeniable fact that his criticisms have a very blunt edge, and that his eulogies are apt to be indiscriminate.

Southey and Wordsworth had a simple method of explaining the neglect of a great author. According to them contemporary neglect affords a negative presumption in favour of permanent reputation. No lofty poet has honour in his own generation. Southey's conviction that his ponderous epics would make the fortune of his children is a pleasant instance of self-delusion. But the theory is generally admitted in regard to Wordsworth; and Landor accepted and defended it with characteristic vigour. "I have published," he says in the conversation with Hare, "five volumes of *Imaginary Conversations*: cut the worst of them through the middle, and there will remain in the decimal fraction enough to satisfy my appetite for fame. I shall dine late; but the dining-room will be well-lighted, the guests few and select." He recurs frequently to the doctrine. "Be patient!" he says, in another character. "From the higher heavens of poetry, it is long before the radiance of the brightest star can reach the world below. We hear that one man finds out one beauty, another man finds out another, placing his observatory and instruments on the poet's grave. The worms must have eaten us before we rightly know what we are. It is only when we are skeletons that we are boxed and ticketed and prized and shown. Be it so! I shall not be tired of waiting." Conscious, as he says in his own person, that in 2,000 years there have not been five volumes of prose (the work of one author) equal to his *Conversations*, he could indeed afford to wait: if conscious of earthly things, he must be waiting still.

This superlative self-esteem strikes one, to say the truth, as part of Landor's abiding boyishness. It is only in schoolboy themes that we are still inclined to talk about the devouring love of fame. Grown-up men look rightly with some contempt upon such aspirations. What work a man does is really done in, or at least through, his own generation; and the posthumous fame which poets affect to value means, for the most part, being known by name to a few antiquarians, schoolmasters, or secluded students. When the poet, to adopt Landor's metaphor, has become a luminous star, his superiority to those which have grown dim by distance is for the first time clearly demonstrated. We can still see

him, though other bodies of his system have vanished into the infinite depths of oblivion. But he has also ceased to give appreciable warmth or light to ordinary human beings. He is a splendid name, but not a living influence. There are, of course, exceptions and qualifications to any such statements, but I have a suspicion that even Shakespeare's chief work may have been done in the Globe Theatre, to living audiences, who felt what they never thought of criticising, and were quite unable to measure; and that spite of all aesthetic philosophers and minute antiquarians and judicious revivals, his real influence upon men's minds has been for the most part declining as his fame has been spreading. To defend or fully expound this heretical dogma would take too much space. The "late-dinner" theory, however, as held by Wordsworth and Landor, is subject to one less questionable qualification. It is an utterly untenable proposition that great men have been generally overlooked in their own day.

If we run over the chief names of our literature, it would be hard to point to one which was not honoured, and sometimes honoured to excess, during its proprietor's lifetime. It is, indeed, true that much ephemeral underwood has often hidden in part the majestic forms which now stand out as sole relics of the forest. It is true also that the petty spite and jealousy of contemporaries, especially of their ablest contemporaries, has often prevented the full recognition of great men. And there have been some whose fame, like that of Bunyan and Defoe, has extended amongst the lower sphere of readers before receiving the ratification of constituted judges. But such irregularities in the distribution of fame do not quite meet the point. I doubt whether one could mention a single case in which an author, overlooked at the time, both by the critics and the mass, has afterwards become famous; and the cases are very rare in which a reputation once decayed has again taken root and shown real vitality. The experiment of resuscitation has been tried of late years with great pertinacity. The forgotten images of our seventeenth-century ancestors have been brought out of the lumber-room amidst immense flourishes of trumpets, but they are terribly worm-eaten; and all efforts to make their statues once more stand firmly on their pedestals have generally failed. Landor himself refused to see the merits of the mere "mushrooms," as he somewhere called them, which grew beneath the Shakspearian oak; and though such men as Chapman, Webster, and Ford have received the warmest eulogies of Lamb and other able successors, their vitality is spasmodic and uncertain. We read them, if we read them, at the point of the critic's bayonet.

The case of Wordsworth is no precedent for Landor. Wordsworth's fame was for a long time confined to a narrow sect, and he did all in his power to hinder its spread by wilful disregard of the established canons—even when founded in reason. A reformer who will not court the prejudices even of his friends is likely to be slow in making converts. But it is one thing to be slow in getting a hearing, and another in attracting men

who are quite prepared to hear. Wordsworth resembled a man coming into a drawing-room with muddy boots and a smock-frock. He courted disgust, and such courtship is pretty sure of success. But Landor made his bow in full court-dress. In spite of the difficulty of his poetry, he had all the natural graces which are apt to propitiate cultivated readers. His prose has merits so conspicuous and so dear to the critical mind, that one might have expected his welcome from the connoisseurs to be warm even beyond the limit of sincerity. To praise him was to announce one's own possession of a fine classical taste, and there can be no greater stimulus to critical enthusiasm. One might have guessed that he would be a favourite with all who set up for a discernment superior to that of the vulgar ; though the causes which must obstruct a wide recognition of his merits are sufficiently obvious. It may be interesting to consider the cause of his illsuccess with some fulness ; and it is a comfort to the critic to reflect that in such a case even obtuseness is in some sort a qualification ; for it will enable one to sympathise with the vulgar insensibility to the offered delicacy, if only to substitute articulate rejection for simple stolid silence.

I do not wish, indeed, to put forward such a claim too unreservedly. I will merely take courage to confess that Landor very frequently bores me. So do a good many writers whom I thoroughly admire. If any courage be wanted for such a confession, it is certainly not when writing upon Landor that one should be reticent for want of example. Nobody ever spoke his mind more freely about great expectations. He is, for example, almost the only poet who ever admitted that he could not read Spenser continuously. Even Milton in Landor's hands, in defiance of his known opinions, was made to speak contemptuously of *The Faery Queen*. "There is scarcely a poet of the same eminence," says Porson, obviously representing Landor in this case, "whom I have found it so delightful to read in, and so hard to read through." What Landor here says of Spenser, I should venture to say of Landor. There are few books of the kind into which one may dip with so great a certainty of finding much to admire as the *Imaginary Conversations*, and few of any high reputation which are so certain to become wearisome after a time. My apology, if apology be needed, shall be given presently. But I must also admit, that on thinking of the whole five volumes, so emphatically extolled by their author, I feel certain twinges of remorse. There is a vigour of feeling, an originality of character, a fineness of style which makes one understand, if not quite agree to, the audacious self-commendation. Part of the effect is due simply to the sheer quantity of good writing. Take any essay separately, and one must admit that—to speak only of his contemporaries—there is a greater charm in passages of equal length by Lamb, De Quincey, or even Hazlitt. None of them gets upon such stilts, or seems so anxious to keep the reader at arm's length. But, on the other hand, there is something imposing in so continuous a flow of stately and generally faultless English, with so many weighty aphorisms

rising spontaneously, and without a splashing or disturbance, to the surface of talk, and such an easy felicity of theme unmarred by the flash and glitter of the modern epigrammatic style.* Lamb is both sweeter and more profound, to say nothing of his incomparable humour; but then Lamb's flight is short and uncertain. De Quincey's passages of splendid rhetoric are too often succeeded by dead levels of verbosity and laboured puerilities which make annoyance alternate with enthusiasm. Hazlitt is often spasmodic, and his intrusive egotism is pettish and undignified. But so far at least as his style is concerned, Landor's unruffled stream of continuous harmony excites one's admiration the more the longer one reads. Hardly any one who has written so much has kept so uniformly to a high level, and so seldom descended to empty verbosity or to downright slipshod. It is true that the substance does not always correspond to the perfection of the form. There are frequent discontinuities of thought where the style is smoothest. He reminds one at times of those Alpine glaciers where an exquisitely rounded surface of snow conceals yawning crevasses beneath; and if one stops for a moment to think, one is apt to break through the crust with an abrupt and annoying jerk.

The excellence of Landor's style has, of course, been universally acknowledged, and it is natural that it should be more appreciated by his fellow-craftsmen than by general readers less interested in technical questions. The defects are the natural complements of its merits. When accused of being too figurative, he had a ready reply. "Wordsworth," he says in one of his *Conversations*, "slithers on the soft mud, and cannot stop himself until he comes down. In his poetry there is as much of prose as there is of poetry in the prose of Milton. But prose on certain occasions can bear a great deal of poetry; on the other hand, poetry sinks and swoons under a moderate weight of prose, and neither fan nor burnt feather can bring her to herself again." The remark about the relations of prose and poetry was originally made in a real conversation with Wordsworth in defence of Landor's own luxuriance. Wordsworth, it is said, took it to himself, and not without reason, as appears by its insertion in this *Conversation*. The retort, however happy, is no more conclusive than other cases of the *tu quoque*. We are too often inclined to say to Landor as Southey says to Porson in another place: "Pray leave these tropes and metaphors." His sense suffers from a superstition of figures, or from the undue pursuit of a figure, till the "wind of the poor phrase is cracked." In the phrase just quoted, for example, we could dispense with the "fan and burnt feather," which have very little relation to the thought. So, to take an instance of the excessively florid, I may quote the phrase in which Marvell defends his want of respect for the

* Let me remark in passing that Landor should apparently have credit for one epigram which has been adopted by more popular authors: "Those who have failed as writers turn reviewers," says Porson to Southey.

aristocracy of his day. "Ever too hard upon great men, Mr. Marvell!" says Bishop Parker; and Marvell replies:—

Little men in lofty places, who throw long shadows because our sun is setting; the men so little and the places so lofty that casting my pebble, I only show where they stand. They would be less contented with themselves, if they had obtained their preferment honestly. Luck and dexterity always give more pleasure than intellect and knowledge; because they fill up what they fall on to the brim at once; and people run to them with acclamations at the splash. Wisdom is reserved and noiseless, contented with hard earnings, and daily letting go some early acquisition to make room for better specimens. But great is the exultation of a worthless man when he receives for the chips and raspings of his Bridewell logwood a richer reward than the best and wisest for extensive tracts of well-cleared truths! Even he who has sold his country —

"Forbear, good Mr. Marvell," says Bishop Parker, and one is inclined to sympathise with the poor man drowned under this cascade of tropes. It is certainly imposing, but I should be glad to know the meaning of the metaphor about "luck and dexterity." Passages occur, again, in which we are tempted to think that Landor is falling into an imitation of an obsolete model. Take, for example, the following:—

A narrow mind cannot be enlarged, nor can a capacious one be contracted. Are we angry with a phial for not being a flask? or do we wonder that the skin of an elephant sits uneasily on a squirrel?

Or this, in reference to Wordsworth:—

Pastiness and flatness are the qualities of a pancake, and thus far he attained his aim: but if he means it for me, let him place the accessories on the table, lest what is insipid and clammy grow into duller accretion and moister viscosity the more I masticate it.

Or a remark given to Newton:—

Wherever there is vacuity of mind, there must either be flaccidity or craving; and this vacuity must necessarily be found in the greater part of princes, from the defects of their education, from the fear of offending them in its progress by interrogations and admonitions, from the habit of rendering all things valueless by the facility with which they are obtained, and transitory by the negligence with which they are received and holden.

Should we not remove the names of Porson and Newton from these sentences, and substitute Sam Johnson? The last passage reads very like a quotation from the *Rambler*. Johnson was, in my opinion and in Landor's, a great writer in spite of his mannerism; but the mannerism is always rather awkward, and in such places we seem to see—certainly not a squirrel—but, say, a thoroughbred horse invested with the skin of an elephant.

These lapses into the inflated are of course exceptional with Landor. There can be no question of the fineness of his perception in all matters of literary form. To say that his standard of style is classical is to repeat a commonplace too obvious for repetition, except to add a doubt whether he is not often too ostentatious and self-conscious in his classi-

dism. He loves and often exhibits a masculine simplicity and speaks with enthusiasm of Locke and Swift in their own departments. Locke is to be "revered;" he is "too simply grand for admiration;" and no one, he thinks, ever had such a power as Swift of saying forcibly and completely whatever he meant to say. But for his own purposes he generally prefers a different model. The qualities which he specially claims seem to be summed up in the conversation upon Bacon's Essays between Newton and Barrow. Cicero and Bacon, says Barrow, have more wisdom between them than all the philosophers of antiquity. Newton's review of the Essays, he adds, "hath brought back to my recollection so much of shrewd judgment, so much of rich imagery, such a profusion of truths so plain as (without his manner of exhibiting them) to appear almost unimportant, that in various high qualities of the human mind I must acknowledge not only Cicero, but every prose writer among the Greeks, to stand far below him. Cicero is least valued for his highest merits, his fulness and his perspicuity. Bad judges (and how few are not so!) desire in composition the concise and obscure; not knowing that the one most frequently arises from paucity of materials, and the other from inability to manage and dispose them." Landor aims, like Bacon, at rich imagery, at giving to thoughts which appear plain more value by fineness of expression, and at compressing shrewd judgments into weighty aphorisms. He would equally rival Cicero in fulness and perspicuity; whilst a severe rejection of everything slovenly or superfluous would save him from ever deviating into the merely florid. So far as style can be really separated from thought, we may admit unreservedly that he has succeeded in his aim, and has attained a rare harmony of tone and colouring.

There may, indeed, be some doubt as to his perspicuity. Southey said that Landor was obscure, whilst adding that he could not explain the cause of the obscurity. Causes enough may be suggested. Besides his incoherency his love of figures, which sometimes become half detached from the underlying thought, and an over-anxiety to avoid mere smartness which sometimes leads to real vagueness, he expects too much from his readers, or perhaps despises them too much. He will not condescend to explanation if you do not catch his drift at half a word. He is so desirous to round off his transitions gracefully, that he obliterates the necessary indications of the main divisions of the subject. When criticising Milton or Dante, he can hardly keep his hand off the finest passages in his desire to pare away superfluities. Treating himself in the same fashion, he leaves none of those little signs which, like the typographical hand prefixed to a notice, are extremely convenient, though strictly superfluous. It is doubtless unpleasant to have the hard framework of logical divisions showing too distinctly in an argument, or to have a too elaborate statement of dates and places and external relations in a romance. But such aids to the memory may be removed too freely. The building may be injured in taking away the scaffolding.

Such remarks, however, will not explain Landor's failure to get a real hold upon a large body of readers. Writers of far greater obscurity and much more repellent blemishes of style to set against much lower merits, have gained a far wider popularity. The want of sympathy between so eminent a literary artist and his time must rest upon some deeper divergence of sentiment. Landor's writings present the same kind of problem as his life. We are told, and we can see for ourselves, that he was a man of many very high, and many very amiable qualities. He was full of chivalrous feeling; capable of the most flowing and delicate courtesy; easily stirred to righteous indignation against every kind of tyranny and bigotry; capable, too, of a tenderness pleasantly contrasted with his outbursts of passing wrath; passionately fond of children, and a true lover of dogs. But with all this, he could never live long at peace with anybody. He was the most impracticable of men, and every turning-point in his career was decided by some vehement quarrel. He had to leave school in consequence of a quarrel, trifling in itself, but aggravated by "a fierce defiance of all authority and a refusal to ask forgiveness." He got into a preposterous scrape at Oxford, and forced the authorities to rusticate him. This branched out into a quarrel with his father. When he set up as a country gentleman at Llanthony Abbey, he managed to quarrel with his neighbours and his tenants, until the accumulating consequences to his purse forced him to go to Italy. On the road thither, he began the first of many quarrels with his wife, which ultimately developed into a chronic quarrel and drove him back to England. From England he was finally dislodged by another quarrel which drove him back to Italy. Intermediate quarrels of minor importance are intercalated between those which provoked decisive crises. The lightheartedness which provoked all these difficulties is not more remarkable than the ease with which he threw them off his mind. Blown hither and thither by his own gusts of passion, he always seems to fall on his feet, and forgets his trouble as a schoolboy forgets yesterday's flogging. On the first transitory separation from his wife, he made himself quite happy by writing Latin verses; and he always seems to have found sufficient consolation in such literary occupation for vexations which would have driven some people out of their mind. He would not, he writes, encounter the rudeness of a certain lawyer to save all his property; but he adds, "I have chastised him in my Latin poetry now in the press." Such a mode of chastisement seems to have been as completely satisfactory to Landor as it doubtless was to the lawyer.

His quarrels do not alienate us, for it is evident that they did not proceed from any malignant passion. If his temper was ungovernable, his passions were not odious, or, in any low sense, selfish. In many, if not all of his quarrels he seems to have had at least a very strong show of right on his side, and to have put himself in the wrong by an excessive insistence upon his own dignity. He was one of those ingenious people who always contrive to be punctilious in the wrong place. It is amusing

to observe how Scott generally bestows upon his heroes so keen a sense of honour that he can hardly save them from running their heads against stone walls ; whilst to their followers he gives an abundance of shrewd sense which fully appreciates Falstaff's theory of honour. Scott himself managed to combine the two qualities ; but poor Landor seems to have had Hotspur's readiness to quarrel on the tenth part of a hair without the redeeming touch of common sense. In a slightly different social sphere, he must, one would fancy, have been the mark of a dozen bullets before he had grown up to manhood : it is not quite clear even now how he avoided duels, unless because he regarded the practice as a Christian barbarism to which the ancients had never condescended.

His position and surroundings tended to aggravate his incoherencies of statement. Like his own Peterborough, he was a man of aristocratic feeling, with a hearty contempt for aristocrats. The expectation that he would one day join the ranks of the country gentlemen unsettled him as a scholar ; and when he became a landed proprietor he despised his fellow "barbarians" with a true scholar's contempt. He was not forced into the ordinary professional groove, and yet did not fully imbibe the prejudices of the class who can afford to be idle, and the natural result is an odd mixture of conflicting prejudices. He is classical in taste and cosmopolitan in life, and yet he always retains a certain John-Bull element. His preference of Shakspeare to Racine is associated with, if not partly prompted by, a mere English antipathy to foreigners. He never becomes Italianised so far as to lose his contempt for men whose ideas of sport rank larks with the orthodox partridge. He abuses Castlereagh and poor George III. to his heart's content, and so far flies in the face of British prejudice ; but it is by no means as a sympathiser with foreign innovations. His republicanism is strongly dashed with old-fashioned conservatism, and he is proud of a doubtful descent from old worthies of the true English type. Through all his would-be paganism we feel that at bottom he is after all a true-born and wrong-headed Englishman. He never, like Shelley, pushed his quarrel with the old order to the extreme, but remained in a solitary cave of Adullam. "There can be no great genius," says Penn to Peterborough, "where there is not profound and continued reasoning." The remark is too good for Penn ; and yet it would be dangerous in Landor's own mouth ; for certainly the defect which most strikes us, both in his life and his writings, is just the inconsistency which leaves most people as the reasoning powers develop. His work was marred by the unreasonableness of a nature so impetuous and so absorbed by any momentary gust of passion that he could never bring his thoughts or his plans to a focus, or conform them to a general scheme. His prejudices master him both in speculation and practice. He cannot fairly rise above them or govern them by reference to general principles, or the permanent interests of his life. In the vulgar phrase, he is always ready to cut off his nose to spite his face. He quarrels with his schoolmaster or his wife. In an instant

he is all fire and fury, runs amuck at his best friends, and does irreparable mischief. Some men might try to atone for such offences by remorse. Landor, unluckily for himself, could forget the past as easily as he could ignore the future. He lives only in the present, and can throw himself into a favourite author or compose Latin verses or an imaginary conversation as though schoolmasters or wives, or duns or critics, had no existence. With such a temperament, reasoning, which implies patient contemplation and painful liberation from prejudice, has no fair chance; his principles are not the growth of thought, but the translation into dogmas of intense likes and dislikes, which have grown up in his mind he scarcely knows how, and gathered strength by sheer force of repetition instead of deliberate examination.

His writings reflect—and in some ways only too faithfully—these idiosyncrasies. Southey said that his temper was the only explanation of his faults. “Never did man represent himself in his writings so much less generous, less just, less compassionate, less noble in all respects than he really is. I certainly,” he adds, “never knew anyone of brighter genius or of kinder heart.” Southey, no doubt, resented certain attacks of Landor’s upon his most cherished opinions; and, truly, nothing but continuous separation could have preserved the friendship between two men so peremptorily opposed upon so many essential points. Southey’s criticism, though sharpened by such latent antagonisms, has really much force. The *Conversations* give much that Landor’s friends would have been glad to ignore; and yet they present such a full-length portrait of the man, that it is better to dwell upon them than upon his poetry, which, moreover, with all its fine qualities, is (in my opinion) of far less intrinsic value. The ordinary reader, however, is repelled from the *Conversations* not only by mere inherent difficulties, but by comments which raise a false expectation. An easy-going critic is apt to assume of any book that it exactly fulfils the ostensible aim of the author. So we are told of *Shakspeare’s Examination* (and on the high authority of Charles Lamb), that no one could have written it except Landor or Shakspeare himself. When Bacon is introduced, we are assured that the aphorisms introduced are worthy of Bacon himself. What Cicero is made to say is exactly what he would have said, “if he could”; and the dialogue between Walton, Cotton, and Oldways is, of course, as good as a passage from the *Complete Angler*. In the same spirit we are told that the dialogues were to be “one-act dramas”; and we are informed how the great philosophers, statesmen, poets, and artists of all ages did in fact pass across the stage, each represented to the life, and discoursing in his most admirable style.

All this is easy to say; but unluckily represents what the *Conversations* would have been had they been perfect. To say that they are very far from perfect is only to say that they were the compositions of a man; but Landor was also a man to whom his best friends would hardly attribute a remarkable immunity from fault. The dialogue, it need hardly

be remarked, is one of the most difficult of all forms of composition. One rule, however, would be generally admitted. Landor defends his digressions on the ground that they always occur in real conversations. If we "adhere to one point," he says (in Southey's person), "it is a disquisition, not a conversation." And he adds, with one of his wilful back-handed blows at Plato, that most writers of dialogue plunge into abstruse questions, and "collect a heap of arguments to be blown away by the bloated whiff of some rhetorical charlatan, tricked out in a multiplicity of ribbons for the occasion." Possibly! but for all that, the perfect dialogue ought not, we should say, to be really incoherent. It should include digressions, but the digressions ought to return upon the main subject. The art consists in preserving real unity in the midst of the superficial deviations rendered easy by this form of conversation. The facility of digression is really a temptation, not a privilege. Anybody can write blank verse of a kind, because it so easily slips into prose; and that is why good blank verse is so rare. And anybody can write a decent dialogue if you allow him to ramble as much as we all do in actual talk. The finest philosophical dialogues are those in which a complete logical framework underlies the dramatic structure. They are a perfect fusion of logic and imagination. Instead of harsh divisions and cross-divisions of the subject, and a balance of abstract arguments, we have vivid portraits of human beings, each embodying a different line of thought. But the logic is still seen, though the more carefully hidden the more exquisite the skill of the artist. And the purely artistic dialogue which describes passion or the emotions arising from a given situation should in the same way set forth a single idea, and preserve a dramatic unity of conception at least as rigidly as a full-grown play. So far as Landor used his facilities as an excuse for rambling, instead of so skilfully subordinating them to the main purpose as to reproduce new variations on the central theme, he is clearly in error, or is at least aiming at a lower kind of excellence. And this, it may be said at once, seems to be the most radical defect in the composition of Landor's *Conversations*. They have the fault which his real talk is said to have exemplified. We are told that his temperament "disqualified him for anything like sustained reasoning, and he instinctively backed away from discussion or argument." Many of the written dialogues are a prolonged series of explosions; when one expects a continuous development of a theme, they are monotonous thunder-growls. Landor undoubtedly had a sufficient share of dramatic power to write short dialogues expressing a single situation with most admirable power, delicacy, and firmness of touch. Nor, again, does the criticism just made refer to those longer dialogues which are in reality a mere string of notes upon poems or proposals for reforms in spelling. The slight dramatic form binds together his pencillings from the margins of *Paradise Lost* or Wordsworth's poems very pleasantly, and enables him to give additional effect to vivacious outbursts of praise or censure. But the more elaborate dialogues suffer grievously from this absence of

a true unity. There is not that skilful evolution of a central idea without the rigid formality of scientific discussion which we admire in the real masterpieces of the art. We have a conglomerate not an organic growth; a series of observations set forth with never-failing elegance of style, and often with singular keenness of perception; but they do not take us beyond the starting-point. When Robinson Crusoe crossed the Pyrenees, his guide led him by such dexterous windings and gradual ascents that he found himself across the mountains before he knew where he was. With Landor it is just the opposite. After many digressions and ramblings we find ourselves back on the same side of the original question. We are marking time with admirable gracefulness, but somehow we are not advancing. Naturally flesh and blood grow weary when there is no apparent end to a discussion, except that the author must in time be wearied of performing variations upon a single theme.

We are more easily reconciled to some other faults which are rather due to expectations raised by his critics than to positive errors. No one, for example, would care to notice an anachronism, if Landor did not occasionally put in a claim for accuracy. I have no objection whatever to allow Hooker to console Bacon for his loss of the chancellorship, in calm disregard of the fact that Hooker died some twenty years before Bacon rose to that high office. The fault can be amended by substituting any other name for Hooker's. Nor do I at all wish to find in Landor that kind of archaeological accuracy which is sought by some composers of historical romances. Were it not that critics have asserted the opposite, it would be hardly worth while to say that Landor's style seldom condescends to adapt itself to the mouth of the speaker, and that from Demosthenes to Porson every interlocutor has palpably the true Landorian trick of speech. Here and there, it is true, the effect is rather unpleasant. Pericles and Aspasia are apt to indulge in criticism of English customs, and no weak regard for time and place prevents Eubulides from denouncing Canning to Demosthenes. The classical dress becomes so thin on such occasions, that even the small degree of illusion which one may fairly desire is too rudely interrupted. The actor does not disguise his voice enough for theatrical purposes. It is perhaps a more serious fault that the dialogue constantly lapses into monologue. We might often remove the names of the talkers as useless interruptions. Some conversations might as well be headed, in legal phraseology, Landor *v.* Landor, or at most Landor *v.* Landor and another—the other being some wretched man of straw or Guy Faux effigy dragged in to be belaboured with weighty aphorisms and talk obtrusive nonsense. Hence sometimes we resent a little the taking in vain of the name of some old friend. It is rather too hard upon Sam Johnson to be made a mere "passive bucket" into which Horne Tooke may pump his philological notions, with scarcely a feeble sputter or two to represent his smashing retorts.

There is yet another criticism or two to be added. The extreme

scrupulousness with which Landor polishes his style and removes superfluities from poetical narrative, smoothing them at times till we can hardly grasp them, might have been applied to some of the wanton digressions in which the dialogues abound. We should have been glad if he had ruthlessly cut out two-thirds of the conversation between Richelieu and others, in which some charming English pastorals are mixed up with a quantity of unmistakable rubbish. But, for the most part, we can console ourselves by a smile. When Landor lowers his head and charges bull-like at the phantom of some king or priest, we are prepared for, and amused by, his impetuosity. Malesherbes discourses with great point and vigour upon French literature, and may fairly diverge into a little politics; but it is certainly comic when he suddenly remembers one of Landor's pet grievances, and the unlucky Rousseau has to discuss a question for which few people could be more ludicrously unfit—the details of a plan for reforming the institution of English justices of the peace. The grave dignity with which the subject is introduced gives additional piquancy to the absurdity. An occasional laugh at Landor is the more valuable because, to say the truth, one is not very likely to laugh with him. Nothing is more difficult for an author—as he here observes in reference to Milton—than to decide upon his own merits as a wit or humourist. I am not quite sure that this is true; for I have certainly found authors distinctly fallible in judging of their own merits as poets and philosophers. But it is undeniable that many a man laughs at his own wit who has to laugh alone. I will not take upon myself to say that Landor was without humour; he has certainly a delicate gracefulness which may be classed with the finer kinds of humour; but if anybody (to take one instance) will read the story which Chaucer tells to Boccaccio and Petrarch and pronounce it to be amusing, I can only say that his notions of humour differ materially from mine. Landor often sins as distinctly, if not as heavily.

Blemishes such as these go some way perhaps to account for Landor's unpopularity. But they are such as might be amply redeemed by his vigour, his fulness, and unflagging energy of style. There is no equally luminous author of great power who does not fall short of his own highest achievements in a large part of his work, and who is not open to the remark that his achievements are not all that we could have wished. It is doubtless best to take what we can get, and not to repine if we do not get something better, the possibility of which is suggested by the actual accomplishment. If Landor had united to his own powers those of Scott or Shakspeare, he would have been improved. Landor, repenting a little for some censures of Milton, says to Southey, "Are we not somewhat like two little beggar-boys who, forgetting that they are in tatters, sit noticing a few stains and rents in their father's raiment?" "But they love him," replies Southey, and we feel the apology to be sufficient.

Can we make it in the case of Landor? Is he a man whom we can

take to our hearts, treating his vagaries and ill-humours as we do the testiness of a valued friend? Or do we feel that he is one whom it is better to have for an acquaintance than for an intimate? The problem seems to have exercised those who knew him best in life. Many, like Southey or Napier, thought him a man of true nobility and tenderness of character, and looked upon his defects as mere superficial blemishes. If some who came closer seem to have had a rather different opinion, we must allow that a man's personal defects are often unimportant in his literary capacity. It has been laid down as a general rule that poets cannot get on with their wives; and yet they are poets in virtue of being loveable at the core. Landor's domestic troubles need not indicate an incapacity for meeting our sympathies any more than the domestic troubles of Shakspeare, Milton, Swift, Burns, Byron, Shelley, or many others. In his poetry a man should show his best self; and defects, important in the daily life which is made up of trifles, may cease to trouble us when admitted to the inmost recesses of his nature.

Landor, undoubtedly, may be loved; but I fancy that he can be loved unreservedly only by a very narrow circle. For when we pass from the form to the substance—from the manner in which his message is delivered to the message itself—we find that the superficial defects rise from very deep roots. Whenever we penetrate to the underlying character we find something harsh and uncongenial mixed with very high qualities. He has pronounced himself upon a wide range of subjects; there is much criticism, some of it of a very rare and admirable order; much theological and political disquisition; and much exposition, in various forms, of the practical philosophy which every man imbibes according to his faculties in his passage through the world. It would be undesirable to discuss seriously his political or religious notions. To say the truth, they are not really worth discussing; they are little more than vehement explosions of unreasoning prejudice. I do not know whether Landor would have approved the famous aspiration about strangling the last of kings with the entrails of the last priest, but some such sentiment seems to sum up all that he really has to say. His doctrine so far coincides with that of Diderot and other revolutionists, though he has no sympathy with their social aspirations. His utterances, however, remind us too much—in substance, though not in form—of the rhetoric of debating societies. They are as factitious as the old-fashioned appeals to the memory of Brutus. They would doubtless make a sensation at the Union. Diogenes tells us that “all nations, all cities, all communities, should combine in one great hunt, like that of the Scythians at the approach of winter, and follow it” (the kingly power, to wit) “up, unrelentingly to its perdition. The diadem should designate the victim; all who wear it, all who offer it, all who bow to it, should perish.” Demosthenes, in less direct language, announces the same plan to Eubulides as the one truth, far more important than any other, and “more conducive to whatever is desirable to the well-educated

and free." We laugh, not because the phrase is overstrained, or intended to have a dramatic truth ; for Landor puts similar sentiments into the mouths of all his favourite speakers ; but simply because we feel it to be a mere form of swearing. The language would have been less elegant, but the meaning just the same, if he had rapped out a good mouth-filling oath whenever he heard the name of king. When, in reference to some such utterances, Mr. Carlyle said that "Landor's principle is mere rebellion," he was much nettled, and declared himself to be in favour of authority. He despised American republicanism, and regarded Venice as the pattern state. He sympathised in this, as in much else, with the theorists of Milton's time, and would have been approved by Harrington or Algernon Sidney ; but, for all that, Mr. Carlyle seems pretty well to have hit the mark. Such republicanism is in reality nothing more than the political expression of intense pride, or, if you prefer the word, self-respect. It is the sentiment of personal dignity, which could not bear the thought that he, Landor, should have to bow the knee to a fool like George III. ; or that Milton should have been regarded as the inferior of such a sneak as Charles I. But the same feeling would have been just as much shocked by the claim of a demagogue to override high-spirited gentlemen. Mobs were every whit as vile as kings. He might have stood for Shakspeare's Coriolanus, if Coriolanus had not an unfortunate want of taste in his language. Landor, indeed, being never much troubled as to consistency, is fond of dilating on the absurdity of any kind of hereditary rank ; but he sympathises, to his last fibre, with the spirit fostered by the existence of an aristocratic caste, and producible, so far as our experience has gone, in no other way. He is generous enough to hate all oppression in every form, and therefore to hate the oppression exercised by a noble as heartily as oppression exercised by a king. He is a big boy ready to fight anyone who bullies his fag ; but with no doubts as to the merits of fagging. But then he never chooses to look at the awkward consequences of his opinion. When talking of politics, an aristocracy full of virtue and talent, ruling on generous principles a people sufficiently educated to obey its natural leaders, is the ideal which is vaguely before his mind. To ask how it is to be produced without hereditary rank, or to be prevented from degenerating into a tyrannical oligarchy, or to be reconciled at all with modern principles, is simply to be impertinent. He answers all such questions by putting himself in imagination into the attitude of a Pericles or Demosthenes or Milton, fulminating against tyrants and keeping the mob in its place by the ascendancy of genius. To recommend Venice as a model is simply to say that you have nothing but contempt for all politics. It is as if a lad should be asked whether he preferred to join a cavalry or an infantry regiment, and should reply that he would only serve under Leonidas.

His religious principles are in the same way little more than the assertion that he will not be fettered in mind or body by any priest on earth. The priest is to him what he was to the deists and materialists

of the eighteenth century—a juggling impostor who uses superstition as an instrument for creeping into the confidence of women and cowards, and burning brave men ; but he has no dreams of the advent of a religion of reason. He ridicules the notion that truth will prevail : it never has and it never will. At bottom he prefers paganism to Christianity because it was tolerant and encouraged art, and allowed philosophers to enjoy as much privilege as they can ever really enjoy—that of living in peace and knowing that their neighbours are harmless fools. After a fashion he likes his own version of Christianity, which is superficially that of many popular preachers : Be tolerant, kindly, and happy, and don't worry your head about dogmas, or become a slave to priests. But then one also feels that humility is generally regarded as an essential part of Christianity, and that in Landor's version it is replaced by something like its antithesis. You should do good too, as you respect yourself and would be respected by men ; but the chief good is the philosophic mind, which can wrap itself in its own consciousness of worth, and enjoy the finest pleasures of life without superstitious asceticism. Let the vulgar amuse themselves with the playthings of their creed, so long as they do not take to playing with faggots. Stand apart and enjoy your own superiority with good-natured contempt.

One of his longest and, in this sense, most characteristic dialogues, is that between Penn and Peterborough. Peterborough is the ideal aristocrat with a contempt for the actual aristocracy ; and Penn represents the religion of common sense. "Teach men to calculate rightly and thou wilt have taught them to live religiously," is Penn's sentiment, and perhaps not too unfaithful to the original. No one could have a more thorough contempt for the mystical element in Quakerism than Landor ; but he loves Quakers as sober, industrious, easy-going people, who regard good-humour and comfort as the ultimate aim of religious life, and who manage to do without lawyers or priests. Peterborough, meanwhile, represents his other side—the haughty, energetic, cultivated aristocrat, who, on the ground of their common aversions, can hold out a friendly hand to the quiet Quaker. Landor, of course, is both at once. He is the noble who rather enjoys giving a little scandal at times to his drab-suited companion ; but, on the whole, thinks that it would be an excellent world if the common people would adopt this harmless form of religion, which tolerates other opinions and does not give any leverage to kings, insolvent aristocrats, or intriguing bishops.

Landor's critical utterances reveal the same tendencies. Much of the criticism has of course an interest of its own. It is the judgment of a real master of language upon many technical points of style, and the judgment, moreover, of one who can look even upon classical poets as one who breathes the same atmosphere at an equal elevation, and who speaks out like a cultivated gentleman, not as a schoolmaster or a specialist. But putting aside this and the crotchets about spelling, which have been dignified with the name of philological theories, the general direction of his sym-
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thics is eminently characteristic. Landor of course pays the inevitable homage to the great names of Plato, Dante, and Shakspeare, and yet it would be scarcely unfair to say that he hates Plato, that Dante gives him far more annoyance than pleasure, and that he really cares little for Shakspeare. The last might be denied on the ground of isolated expressions. "A rib of Shakspeare," he says, "would have made a Milton: the same portion of Milton all poets born ever since." But he speaks of Shakspeare in conventional terms, and seldom quotes or alludes to him. When he touches Milton his eyes brighten and his voice takes a tone of reverent enthusiasm. His ear is dissatisfied with everything for days and weeks after the harmony of *Paradise Lost*. "Leaving this magnificent temple, I am hardly to be pacified by the fairy-built chambers, the rich cupboards of embossed plate and the omnigenous images of Shakspeare." That is his genuine impression. Some readers may appeal to that *Examination of Shakspeare* which (as we have seen) was held by Lamb to be beyond the powers of any other writer except its hero. I confess that, in my opinion, Lamb could have himself drawn a far more sympathetic portrait of Shakspeare, and that Scott would have brought out the whole scene with incomparably greater vividness. Call it a morning in an English country-house in the sixteenth century, and it will be full of charming passages along with some laborious failures. But when we are forced to think of Slender and Shallow, and Sir Hugh Evans, and the Shakspearian method of portraiture, the personages in Landor's talk seem half asleep and terribly given to twaddle. His view of Dante is less equivocal. In the whole *Inferno*, Petrarcha (evidently representing Landor) finds nothing admirable but the famous descriptions of Francesca and Ugolino. They are the "greater and lesser oases" in a vast desert. And he would pare one of these fine passages to the quick, whilst the other provokes the remark ("we must whisper it") that Dante is "the great master of the disgusting." He seems really to prefer Boccaccio and Ovid, to say nothing of Homer and Virgil. Plato is denounced still more unsparingly. From Aristotle and Diogenes down to Lord Chatham, assailants are set on to worry him, and tear to pieces his gorgeous robes with just an occasional perfunctory apology. Even Lady Jane Grey is deprived of her favourite. She consents on Ascham's petition to lay aside books, but she excepts Cicero, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Polybius: the "others I do resign;" they are good for the arbour and garden walk, but not for the fireside or pillow. This is surely to wrong the poor soul; but Landor is intolerant in his enthusiasm for his philosophical favourites. Epicurus is the teacher whom he really delights to honour, and Cicero is forced to confess in his last hours that he has nearly come over to the camp of his old adversary.

It is easy to interpret the meaning of these prejudices. Landor hates and despises the romantic and the mystic. He has not the least feeling for the art which owes its powers to suggestions of the infinite, or to symbols forced into grotesqueness by the effort to express that for which

no thought can be adequate. He refuses to bother himself with allegory or dreamy speculation, and, unlike Sir T. Browne, hates to lose himself in an "O Altitudo!" He cares nothing for Dante's inner thoughts, and sees only a hideous chamber of horrors in the *Inferno*. Plato is a mere compiler of idle sophistries and contemptible to the common sense and worldly wisdom of Locke and Bacon. In the same spirit he despised Wordsworth's philosophising as heartily as Jeffrey, and though he tried to be just, could really see nothing in him except the writer of good rustic idylls, and of one good piece of paganism, the *Laodamia*.* From such a point of view he ranks him below Burns, Scott, and Cowper, and makes poor Southey consent—Southey who ranked Wordsworth with Milton!

These tendencies are generally summed up by speaking of Landor's objectivity and Hellenism. I have no particular objection to those words except that they seem rather vague and to leave our problem untouched. A man may be as "objective" as you please in a sense, and as thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Greek art, and yet may manage to fall in with the spirit of our own times. The truth is, I fancy, that a simpler name may be given to Landor's tastes, and that we may find them exemplified nearer home. There is many a good country gentleman who rides well to hounds, and is most heartily "objective" in the sense of hating metaphysics and elaborate allegory and unintelligible art, and preferring a glass of wine and a talk with a charming young lady to mystic communings with the worldspirit; and as for Landor's Hellenism, that surely ought not to be an uncommon phenomenon in the region of English public schools. It is really an odd result that we should be so much puzzled by the very man who seems to realise precisely that ideal of culture upon which our most popular system of education is apparently moulded. Here at last is a man who really takes the habit of writing Latin verses seriously; making it a consolation in trouble as well as an elegant amusement. He hopes to rest his fame upon it, and even by a marvellous *tour de force* writes a great deal of English poetry which for all the world reads exactly like a first-rate copy of modern Greek Iambics. For once we have produced just what the system ought to produce, and yet we cannot make him out.

The reason for our not producing more Landors is indeed pretty simple. Men of real poetic genius are exceedingly rare at all times, and it is still rarer to find such a man who remains a schoolboy all his life. Landor is precisely a glorified and sublime edition of the model sixth-form lad, only with an unusually strong infusion of schoolboy perversion. Perverse lads, indeed, generally kick over the traces at an earlier point: refuse to learn anything. Boys who take kindly to the classical are generally good, that is to say, docile. They develop into tutors and

* De Quincey gets into a curious puzzle about Landor's remarks, asking which of Wordsworth's poems is meant; and making oddly erroneous guesses,

professors ; or, when the cares of life begin to press, they start their cargo of classical lumber and fill the void with law or politics. Landor's peculiar temperament led him to kick against authority, whilst he yet imbibed the spirit of the teaching fully, and in some respects rather too fully.

The impatient and indomitable temper which made quiet or continuous meditation impossible, and the accidental circumstances of his life, left him in possession of qualities which are in most men subdued or expelled by the hard discipline of life. Brought into impulsive collision with all kinds of authorities, he set up a kind of schoolboy republicanism, and used all his poetic eloquence to give it an air of reality. But he never cared to bring it into harmony with any definite system of thought, or let his outbursts of temper transport him into settled antagonism with accepted principles. His aristocratic feeling lay deeper than his quarrels with aristocrats. He troubled himself just as little about theological as about political theories : he was as utterly impervious as the dullest of squires to the mystic philosophy imported by Coleridge, and found the world quite rich enough in sources of enjoyment without tormenting himself about the unseen and the ugly superstitions which thrive in mental twilight. But he had quarrelled with parsons as much as with lawyers, and could not stand the thought of a priest interfering with his affairs or limiting his amusements. And so he set up as a tolerant and hearty disciple of Epicurus. Chivalrous sentiment and an exquisite perception of the beautiful saved him from any gross interpretation of his master's principles ; although, to say the truth, he shows an occasional laxity on some points which savours of the easy-going pagan, or perhaps of the noble of the old school. As he grew up he drank deep of English literature, and sympathised with the grand republican pride of Milton—as sturdy a rebel as himself, and a still nobler because more serious rhetorician. He went to Italy, and as he imbibed Italian literature, sympathised with the joyous spirit of Boccaccio and the eternal boyishness of classical art. Mediævalism and all mystic philosophies remained unintelligible to this true-born Englishman. Irritated rather than humbled by his incapacity, he cast them aside, pretty much as a schoolboy might throw a Plato at the head of a pedantic master.

The best and most attractive dialogues are those in which he can give free play to this Epicurean sentiment ; forget his political mouthing, and inoculate us for the moment with the spirit of youthful enjoyment. Nothing can be more perfectly charming in its way than Epicurus in his exquisite garden, discoursing, on his pleasant knoll, where, with violets, cyclamens, and convolvuluses clustering round, he talks to his lovely girl-disciples upon the true theory of life—temperate enjoyment of all refined pleasures, forgetfulness of all cares, and converse with true chosen spirits far from the noise of the profane vulgar : of the art, in short, by which a man of fine cultivation may make the most of this life, and learn to take death as a calm and happy subsidence into oblivion. Nor far behind is

the dialogue in which Lucullus entertains Caesar in his delightful villa, and illustrates by example, as well as precept, Landor's favourite doctrine of the vast superiority of the literary to the active life. Politics, as he makes even Demosthenes admit, are the "sad refuge of restless minds, averse from business and from study." And certainly there are moods in which we could ask nothing better than to live in a remote villa, in which wealth and art have done everything in their power to give all the pleasures compatible with perfect refinement and contempt of the grosser tastes. Only it must be admitted that this is not quite a gospel for the million. And probably the highest triumph is in the *Pentameron*, where the whole scene is so vividly coloured by so many delicate touches, and such charming little episodes of Italian life, that we seem almost to have seen the fat wheezy poet hoisting himself on to his pampered steed, to have listened to the village gossip, and followed the little flirtations in which the true poets take so kindly an interest; and are quite ready to pardon certain useless digressions and critical vagaries, and to overlook complacently any little laxity of morals.

These, and many of the shorter and more dramatic dialogues, have a rare charm, and the critic will return to analyse, if he can, their technical qualities. But little explanation can be needed, after reading them, of Landor's want of popularity. If he had applied half as much literary skill to expand commonplace sentiment; if he had talked that kind of gentle twaddle by which some recent essayists edify their readers, he might have succeeded in gaining a wide popularity. Or if he had been really, as some writers seem to fancy, a deep and systematic thinker as well as a most admirable artist, he would have extorted a hearing even while provoking dissent. But his boyish waywardness has disqualified him from reaching the deeper sympathies of either class. We feel that the most superhuman of schoolboys has really a rather shallow view of life. His various outbursts of wrath amuse us at best when they do not bore, even though they take the outward form of philosophy or statesmanship. He has really no answer or vestige of answer for any problems of his, nor indeed of any other time, for he has no basis of serious thought. All he can say is, ultimately, that he feels himself in a very uncongenial atmosphere, from which it is delightful to retire, in imagination, to the society of Epicurus, or the study of a few literary masterpieces. That may be very true, but it can be interesting only to a few men of similar taste; and men of profound insight, whether of the poetic or the philosophic temperament, are apt to be vexed by his hasty dogmatism and irritable rejection of much which deserved his sympathy. His wanton quarrel with the world has been avenged by the world's indifference. We may regret the result, when we see what rare qualities have been cruelly wasted, but we cannot fairly shut our eyes to the fact that the world has a very strong case.

In International Episode.**IN TWO PARTS.****PART I.**

Four years ago—in 1874—two young Englishmen had occasion to go to the United States. They crossed the ocean at midsummer, and, arriving in New York on the first day of August, were much struck with the fervid temperature of that city. Disembarking upon the wharf, they climbed into one of those huge high-hung coaches which convey passengers to the hotels, and with a great deal of bouncing and bumping, took their course through Broadway. The midsummer aspect of New York is not perhaps the most favourable one ; still, it is not without its picturesque and even brilliant side. Nothing could well resemble less a typical English street than the interminable avenue, rich in incongruities, through which our two travellers advanced—looking out on each side of them at the comfortable animation of the sidewalks, the high-coloured, heterogeneous architecture, the huge white marble façades, glittering in the strong, crude light, and bedizened with gilded lettering, the multifarious awnings, banners, and streamers, the extraordinary number of omnibuses, horse-cars, and other democratic vehicles, the vendors of cooling fluids, the white trousers and big straw-hats of the policemen, the tripping gait of the modish young persons on the pavement, the general brightness, newness, juvenility, both of people and things. The young men had exchanged few observations ; but in crossing Union Square, in front of the monument to Washington—in the very shadow, indeed, projected by the image of the *pater patriæ*—one of them remarked to the other, “It seems a rum-looking place.”

“Ah, very odd, very odd,” said the other, who was the clever man of the two.

“Pity it’s so beastly hot,” resumed the first speaker, after a pause.

“You know we are in a low latitude,” said his friend.

“I daresay,” remarked the other.

“I wonder,” said the second speaker, presently, “if they can give one a bath.”

“I daresay not,” rejoined the other.

“Oh, I say !” cried his comrade.

This animated discussion was checked by their arrival at the hotel, which had been recommended to them by an American gentleman whose acquaintance they made—with whom, indeed, they became very intimate—on the steamer, and who had proposed to accompany them to

the inn and introduce them, in a friendly way, to the proprietor. This plan, however, had been defeated by their friend's finding that his "partner" was awaiting him on the wharf, and that his commercial associate desired him instantly to come and give his attention to certain telegrams received from St. Louis. But the two Englishmen, with nothing but their national prestige and personal graces to recommend them, were very well received at the hotel, which had an air of capacious hospitality. They found that a bath was not unattainable, and were indeed struck with the facilities for prolonged and reiterated immersion with which their apartment was supplied. After bathing a good deal—more indeed than they had ever done before on a single occasion—they made their way into the dining-room of the hotel, which was a spacious restaurant, with a fountain in the middle, a great many tall plants in ornamental tubs, and an array of French waiters. The first dinner on land, after a sea voyage, is under any circumstances a delightful occasion, and there was something particularly agreeable in the circumstances in which our young Englishmen found themselves. They were extremely good-natured young men; they were more observant than they appeared; in a sort of inarticulate, accidentally dissimulative fashion, they were highly appreciative. This was perhaps especially the case with the elder, who was also, as I have said, the man of talent. They sat down at a little table which was a very different affair from the great clattering see-saw in the saloon of the steamer. The wide doors and windows of the restaurant stood open, beneath large awnings, to a wide pavement, where there were other plants in tubs, and rows of spreading trees, and beyond which there was a large shady square, without any palings and with marble-paved walks. And above the vivid verdure rose other façades of white marble and of pale chocolate-coloured stone, squaring themselves against the deep blue sky. Here, outside, in the light and the shade and the heat, there was a great tinkling of the bells of innumerable street-cars, and a constant strolling and shuffling and rustling of many pedestrians, a large proportion of whom were young women in Pompadour-looking dresses. Within, the place was cool and vaguely-lighted; with theplash of water, the odour of flowers and the flitting of French waiters, as I have said, upon soundless carpets.

"It's rather like Paris, you know," said the younger of our two travellers.

"It's like Paris—only more so," his companion rejoined.

"I suppose it's the French waiters," said the first speaker. "Why don't they have French waiters in London?"

"Fancy a French waiter at a club," said his friend.

The young Englishman stared a little, as if he could not fancy it. "In Paris I'm very apt to dine at a place where there's an English waiter. Don't you know, what's-his-name's, close to the thingumbob? They always set an English waiter at me. I suppose they think I can't speak French."

"Well, you can't." And the elder of the young Englishmen unfolded his napkin.

His companion took no notice whatever of this declaration. "I say," he resumed, in a moment, "I suppose we must learn to speak American. I suppose we must take lessons."

"I can't understand them," said the clever man.

"What the deuce is *he* saying?" asked his comrade, appealing from the French waiter.

"He is recommending some soft-shell crabs," said the clever man.

And so, in desultory observation of the idiosyncrasies of the new society in which they found themselves, the young Englishmen proceeded to dine—going in largely, as the phrase is, for cooling draughts and dishes, of which their attendant offered them a very long list. After dinner they went out and slowly walked about the neighbouring streets. The early dusk of waning summer was coming on, but the heat was still very great. The pavements were hot even to the stout boot-soles of the British travellers, and the trees along the kerb-stone emitted strange exotic odours. The young men wandered through the adjoining square—that queer place without palings, and with marble walks arranged in black and white lozenges. There were a great many benches, crowded with shabby-looking people, and the travellers remarked, very justly, that it was not much like Belgrave Square. On one side was an enormous hotel, lifting up into the hot darkness an immense array of open, brightly-lighted windows. At the base of this populous structure was an eternal jangle of horse-cars, and all round it, in the upper dusk, was a sinister hum of mosquitoes. The ground-floor of the hotel seemed to be a huge transparent cage, flinging a wide glare of gaslight into the street, of which it formed a sort of public adjunct, absorbing and emitting the passers-by promiscuously. The young Englishmen went in with everyone else, from curiosity, and saw a couple of hundred men sitting on divans along a great marble-paved corridor, with their legs stretched out, together with several dozen more standing in a *queue*, as at the ticket-office of a railway station, before a brilliantly illuminated counter, of vast extent. These latter persons, who carried portmanteaux in their hands, had a dejected, exhausted look; their garments were not very fresh, and they seemed to be rendering some mysterious tribute to a magnificent young man with a waxed moustache and a shirt-front adorned with diamond buttons, who every now and then dropped an absent glance over their multitudinous patience. They were American citizens doing homage to an hotel-clerk.

By bed-time—in their impatience to taste of a terrestrial couch again our seafarers went to bed early—it was still insufferably hot, and the buzz of the mosquitoes at the open windows might have passed for an audible crepititation of the temperature. "We can't stand this, you know," the young Englishmen said to each other; and they tossed about

all night more boisterously than they had tossed upon the Atlantic billows. On the morrow, their first thought was that they would re-embark that day for England ; and then it occurred to them that they might find an asylum nearer at hand. The cave of *Æolus* became their ideal of comfort, and they wondered where the Americans went when they wished to cool off. They had not the least idea, and they determined to apply for information to Mr. J. L. Westgate. This was the name inscribed in a bold hand on the back of a letter carefully preserved in the pocket-book of our junior traveller. Beneath the address, in the left-hand corner of the envelope, were the words, "Introducing Lord Lambeth and Percy Beaumont, Esq." The letter had been given to the two Englishmen by a good friend of theirs in London, who had been in America two years previously and had singled out Mr. J. L. Westgate from the many friends he had left there as the consignee, as it were, of his compatriots. "He is a capital fellow," the Englishman in London had said, "and he has got an awfully pretty wife. He's tremendously hospitable—he will do everything in the world for you ; and as he knows everyone over there, it is quite needless I should give you any other introduction. He will make you see everyone ; trust to him for putting you into circulation. He has got a tremendously pretty wife." It was natural that in the hour of tribulation Lord Lambeth and Mr. Percy Beaumont should have bethought themselves of a gentleman whose attractions had been thus vividly depicted ; all the more so that he lived in the Fifth Avenue and that the Fifth Avenue, as they had ascertained the night before, was contiguous to their hotel. "Ten to one he'll be out of town," said Percy Beaumont ; "but we can at least find out where he has gone, and we can immediately start in pursuit. He can't possibly have gone to a hotter place, you know."

"Oh, there's only one hotter place," said Lord Lambeth, "and I hope he hasn't gone there."

They strolled along the shady side of the street to the number indicated upon the precious letter. The house presented an imposing chocolate-coloured expanse, relieved by facings and window-cornices of florid sculpture, and by a couple of dusty rose-trees, which clambered over the balconies and the portico. This last-mentioned feature was approached by a monumental flight of steps.

"Rather better than a London house," said Lord Lambeth, looking down from this altitude, after they had rung the bell.

"It depends upon what London house you mean," replied his companion. "You have a tremendous chance to get wet between the house-door and your carriage."

"Well," said Lord Lambeth, glancing at the burning heavens, "I guess it doesn't rain so much here!"

The door was opened by a long negro in a white jacket, who grinned familiarly when Lord Lambeth asked for Mr. Westgate.

"He ain't at home, sir ; he's down town at his o'fice."

"Oh, at his office?" said the visitors. "And when will he be at home?"

"Well, sir, when he goes out dis way in de mo'ning, he ain't liable to come home all day."

This was discouraging; but the address of Mr. Westgate's office was freely imparted by the intelligent black, and was taken down by Percy Beaumont in his pocket-book. The two gentlemen then returned, languidly, to their hotel, and sent for a hackney-coach; and in this commodious vehicle they rolled comfortably down town. They measured the whole length of Broadway again, and found it a path of fire; and then, deflecting to the left, they were deposited by their conductor before a fresh, light, ornamental structure, ten stories high, in a street crowded with keen-faced, light-limbed young men, who were running about very quickly and stopping each other eagerly at corners and in doorways. Passing into this brilliant building, they were introduced by one of the keen-faced young men—he was a charming fellow, in wonderful cream-coloured garments and a hat with a blue ribbon, who had evidently perceived them to be aliens and helpless—to a very snug hydraulic elevator, in which they took their place with many other persons, and which, shooting upward in its vertical socket, presently projected them into the seventh horizontal compartment of the edifice. Here, after brief delay, they found themselves face to face with the friend of their friend in London. His office was composed of several different rooms, and they waited very silently in one of them after they had sent in their letter and their cards. The letter was not one which it would take Mr. Westgate very long to read, but he came out to speak to them more instantly than they could have expected; he had evidently jumped up from his work. He was a tall, lean personage, and was dressed all in fresh white linen; he had a thin, sharp, familiar face, with an expression that was at one and the same time sociable and business-like, a quick, intelligent eye, and a large brown moustache, which concealed his mouth and made his chin, beneath it, look small. Lord Lambeth thought he looked tremendously clever.

"How do you do, Lord Lambeth—how do you do, sir?" he said, holding the open letter in his hand. "I'm very glad to see you—I hope you're very well. You had better come in here—I think it's cooler;" and he led the way into another room, where there were law-books and papers, and windows wide open beneath striped awnings. Just opposite one of the windows, on a line with his eyes, Lord Lambeth observed the weather-vane of a church steeple. The uproar of the street sounded infinitely far below, and Lord Lambeth felt very high in the air. "I say it's cooler," pursued their host, "but everything is relative. How do you stand the heat?"

"I can't say we like it," said Lord Lambeth; "but Beaumont likes it better than I."

"Well, it won't last," Mr. Westgate very cheerfully declared;

"nothing unpleasant lasts over here. It was very hot when Captain Littledale was here; he did nothing but drink sherry-cobblers. He expresses some doubt in his letter whether I will remember him—as if I didn't remember making six sherry-cobblers for him one day, in about twenty minutes. I hope you left him well; two years having elapsed since then."

"Oh, yes, he's all right," said Lord Lambeth.

"I am always very glad to see your countrymen," Mr. Westgate pursued. "I thought it would be time some of you should be coming along. A friend of mine was saying to me only a day or two ago, 'It's time for the water-melons and the Englishmen.'"

"The Englishmen and the water-melons just now are about the same thing," Percy Beaumont observed, wiping his dripping forehead.

"Ah, well, we'll put you on ice, as we do the melons. You must go down to Newport."

"We'll go anywhere!" said Lord Lambeth.

"Yes, you want to go to Newport—that's what you want to do," Mr. Westgate affirmed. "But let's see—when did you get here?"

"Only yesterday," said Percy Beaumont.

"Ah, yes, by the 'Russia.' Where are you staying?"

"At the 'Hanover,' I think they call it."

"Pretty comfortable?" inquired Mr. Westgate.

"It seems a capital place, but I can't say we like the gnats," said Lord Lambeth.

Mr. Westgate stared and laughed. "Oh, no, of course you don't like the gnats. We shall expect you to like a good many things over here, but we shan't insist upon your liking the gnats; though certainly you'll admit that, as gnats, they are fine, eh? But you oughtn't to remain in the city."

"So we think," said Lord Lambeth. "If you would kindly suggest something—"

"Suggest something, my dear sir?"—and Mr. Westgate looked at him, narrowing his eyelids. "Open your mouth and shut your eyes! Leave it to me, and I'll put you through. It's a matter of national pride with me that all Englishmen should have a good time; and, as I have had considerable practice, I have learned to minister to their wants. I find they generally want the right thing. So just please to consider yourselves my property; and if anyone should try to appropriate you, please to say, 'Hands off; too late for the market.' But let's see," continued the American, in his slow, humorous voice, with a distinctness of utterance which appeared to his visitors to be part of a humorous intention—a strangely leisurely, speculative voice for a man evidently so busy and, as they felt, so professional—"let's see; are you going to make something of a stay, Lord Lambeth?"

"Oh dear no," said the young Englishman; "my cousin was coming

over on some business, so I just came across, at an hour's notice, for the lark."

"Is it your first visit to the United States?"

"Oh dear, yes."

"I was obliged to come on some business," said Percy Beaumont "and I brought Lambeth along."

"And *you* have been here before, sir?"

"Never—never."

"I thought, from your referring to business —" said Mr. Westgate.

"Oh, you see I'm by way of being a barrister," Percy Beaumont answered. "I know some people that think of bringing a suit against one of your railways, and they asked me to come over and take measures accordingly."

Mr. Westgate gave one of his slow, keen looks again. "What's your railroad?" he asked.

"The Tennessee Central."

The American tilted back his chair a little, and poised it an instant. "Well, I'm sorry you want to attack one of our institutions," he said, smiling. "But I guess you had better enjoy yourself *first!*"

"I'm certainly rather afraid I can't work in this weather," the young barrister confessed.

"Leave that to the natives," said Mr. Westgate. "Leave the Tennessee Central to me, Mr. Beaumont. Some day we'll talk it over, and I guess I can make it square. But I didn't know you Englishmen ever did any work, in the upper classes."

"Oh, we do a lot of work; don't we, Lambeth?" asked Percy Beaumont.

"I must certainly be at home by the 19th of September," said the younger Englishman, irrelevantly, but gently.

"For the shooting, eh? or is it the hunting—or the fishing?" inquired his entertainer.

"Oh, I must be in Scotland," said Lord Lambeth, blushing a little.

"Well then," rejoined Mr. Westgate, "you had better amuse yourself first, also. You must go down and see Mrs. Westgate."

"We should be so happy—if you would kindly tell us the train," said Percy Beaumont.

"It isn't a train—it's a boat."

"Oh, I see. And what is the name of—a—the—a—town?"

"It isn't a town," said Mr. Westgate, laughing. "It's a—well, what shall I call it? It's a watering-place. In short, it's Newport. You'll see what it is. It's cool; that's the principal thing. You will greatly oblige me by going down there and putting yourself into the hands of Mrs. Westgate. It isn't perhaps for me to say it; but you couldn't be in better hands. Also in those of her sister, who is staying with her. She is very fond of Englishmen. She thinks there is nothing like them."

"Mrs. Westgate or—a—her sister?" asked Percy Beaumont, modestly, yet in the tone of an inquiring traveller.

"Oh, I mean my wife," said Mr. Westgate. "I don't suppose my sister-in-law knows much about them. She has always led a very quiet life; she has lived in Boston."

Percy Beaumont listened with interest. "That, I believe," he said, "is the most—a—intellectual town?"

"I believe it is very intellectual. I don't go there much," responded his host.

"I say, we ought to go there," said Lord Lambeth to his companion.

"Oh, Lord Lambeth, wait till the great heat is over!" Mr. Westgate interposed. "Boston in this weather would be very trying; it's not the temperature for intellectual exertion. At Boston, you know, you have to pass an examination at the city limits; and when you come away they give you a kind of degree."

Lord Lambeth stared, blushing a little; and Percy Beaumont stared a little also—but only with his fine natural complexion; glancing aside after a moment to see that his companion was not looking too credulous, for he had heard a great deal of American humour. "I daresay it is very jolly," said the younger gentleman.

"I daresay it is," said Mr. Westgate. "Only I must impress upon you that at present—to-morrow morning, at an early hour—you will be expected at Newport. We have a house there; half the people in New York go there for the summer. I am not sure that at this very moment my wife can take you in; she has got a lot of people staying with her; I don't know who they all are; only she may have no room. But you can begin with the hotel, and meanwhile you can live at my house. In that way—simply sleeping at the hotel—you will find it tolerable. For the rest, you must make yourself at home at my place. You mustn't be shy, you know; if you are only here for a month that will be a great waste of time. Mrs. Westgate won't neglect you, and you had better not try to resist her. I know something about that. I expect you'll find some pretty girls on the premises. I shall write to my wife by this afternoon's mail, and to-morrow morning she and Miss Alden will look out for you. Just walk right in and make yourself comfortable. Your steamer leaves from this part of the city, and I will immediately send out and get you a cabin. Then, at half-past four o'clock, just call for me here, and I will go with you and put you on board. It's a big boat; you might get lost. A few days hence, at the end of the week, I will come down to Newport, and see how you are getting on."

The two young Englishmen inaugurated the policy of not resisting Mrs. Westgate by submitting, with great docility and thankfulness, to her husband. He was evidently a very good fellow, and he made an impression upon his visitors; his hospitality seemed to recommend itself, consciously—with a friendly wink, as it were—as if it hinted, judicially, that you could not possibly make a better bargain. Lord Lambeth and

his cousin left their entertainer to his labours and returned to their hotel, where they spent three or four hours in their respective shower-baths. Percy Beaumont had suggested that they ought to see something of the town ; but "Oh, damn the town !" his noble kinsman had rejoined. They returned to Mr. Westgate's office in a carriage, with their luggage, very punctually ; but it must be reluctantly recorded that, this time, he kept them waiting so long that they felt themselves missing the steamer and were deterred only by an amiable modesty from dispensing with his attendance and starting on a hasty scramble to the wharf. But when at last he appeared, and the carriage plunged into the purlieus of Broadway, they jolted and jostled to such good purpose that they reached the huge white vessel while the bell for departure was still ringing and the absorption of passengers still active. It was indeed, as Mr. Westgate had said, a big boat, and his leadership in the innumerable and interminable corridors and cabins, with which he seemed perfectly acquainted, and of which anyone and everyone appeared to have the *entrée*, was very grateful to the slightly bewildered voyagers. He showed them their state-room—a spacious apartment, embellished with gas-lamps, mirrors *en pied* and sculptured furniture—and then, long after they had been intimately convinced that the steamer was in motion and launched upon the unknown stream that they were about to navigate, he bade them a sociable farewell.

"Well, good-by, Lord Lambeth," he said. "Good-by, Mr. Percy Beaumont ; I hope you'll have a good time. Just let them do what they want with you. I'll come down by-and-by and look after you."

The young Englishmen emerged from their cabin and amused themselves with wandering about the immense labyrinthine steamer, which struck them as an extraordinary mixture of a ship and an hotel. It was densely crowded with passengers, the larger number of whom appeared to be ladies and very young children ; and in the big saloons, ornamented in white and gold, which followed each other in surprising succession, beneath the swinging gas-light, and among the small side-passage where the negro domestics of both sexes assembled with an air of philosophic leisure, everyone was moving to and fro and exchanging loud and familiar observations. Eventually, at the instance of a discriminating black, our young men went and had some "supper," in a wonderful place arranged like a theatre, where, in a gilded gallery, upon which little boxes appeared to open, a large orchestra was playing operatic selections, and, below, people were handing about bills of fare, as if they had been programmes. All this was sufficiently curious ; but the agreeable thing later, was to sit out on one of the great white decks of the steamer, in the warm breezy darkness, and, in the vague starlight, to make out the line of low, mysterious coast. The young Englishmen tried American cigars—those of Mr. Westgate—and talked together as they usually talked, with many odd silences, lapses of logic and incongruities of transition ; like people who have grown old together, and learned to supply

each other's missing phrases; or, more especially, like people thoroughly conscious of a common point of view, so that a style of conversation superficially lacking in finish might suffice for reference to a fund of associations in the light of which everything was all right.

"We really seem to be going out to sea," Percy Beaumont observed. "Upon my word, we are going back to England. He has shipped us off again. I call that 'real mean.'"

"I suppose it's all right," said Lord Lambeth. "I want to see those pretty girls at Newport. You know he told us the place was an island; and aren't all islands in the sea?"

"Well," resumed the elder traveller after a while, "if his house is as good as his cigars, we shall do very well."

"He seems a very good fellow," said Lord Lambeth, as if this idea had just occurred to him.

"I say, we had better remain at the inn," rejoined his companion, presently. "I don't think I like the way he spoke of his house. I don't like stopping in the house with such a tremendous lot of women."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Lord Lambeth. And then they smoked awhile in silence. "Fancy his thinking we do no work in England!" the young man resumed.

"I daresay he didn't really think so," said Percy Beaumont.

"Well, I guess they don't know much about England over here!" declared Lord Lambeth, humorously. And then there was another long pause. "He was devilish civil," observed the young nobleman.

"Nothing, certainly, could have been more civil," rejoined his companion.

"Littledale said his wife was great fun," said Lord Lambeth.

"Whose wife—Littledale's?"

"This American's—Mrs. Westgate. What's his name? J. L."

Beaumont was silent a moment. "What was fun to Littledale," he said at last, rather sententiously, "may be death to us."

"What do you mean by that?" asked his kinsman. "I am as good a man as Littledale."

"My dear boy, I hope you won't begin to flirt," said Percy Beaumont.

"I don't care. I daresay I shan't begin."

"With a married woman, if she's bent upon it, it's all very well," Beaumont expounded. "But our friend mentioned a young lady—a sister, a sister-in-law. For God's sake, don't get entangled with her."

"How do you mean, entangled?"

"Depend upon it she will try to hook you."

"Oh, bother!" said Lord Lambeth.

"American girls are very clever," urged his companion.

"So much the better," the young man declared.

"I fancy they are always up to some game of that sort," Beaumont continued.

"They can't be worse than they are in England," said Lord Lambeth, judicially.

"Ah, but in England," replied Beaumont, "you have got your natural protectors. You have got your mother and sisters."

"My mother and sisters—" began the young nobleman, with a certain energy. But he stopped in time, puffing at his cigar.

"Your mother spoke to me about it, with tears in her eyes," said Percy Beaumont. "She said she felt very nervous. I promised to keep you out of mischief."

"You had better take care of yourself," said the object of maternal and ducal solicitude.

"Ah," rejoined the young barrister, "I haven't the expectation of a hundred thousand a year—not to mention other attractions."

"Well," said Lord Lambeth, "don't cry out before you're hurt!"

It was certainly very much cooler at Newport, where our travellers found themselves assigned to a couple of diminutive bed-rooms in a far-away angle of an immense hotel. They had gone ashore in the early summer twilight, and had very promptly put themselves to bed; thanks to which circumstance and to their having, during the previous hours, in their commodious cabin, slept the sleep of youth and health, they began to feel, towards eleven o'clock, very alert and inquisitive. They looked out of their windows across a row of small green fields, bordered with low stone walls, of rude construction, and saw a deep blue ocean lying beneath a deep blue sky and flecked now and then with scintillating patches of foam. A strong, fresh breeze came in through the curtainless casements and prompted our young men to observe, generously, that it didn't seem half a bad climate. They made other observations after they had emerged from their rooms in pursuit of breakfast—a meal of which they partook in a huge bare hall, where a hundred negroes, in white jackets, were shuffling about upon an uncarpeted floor; where the flies were superabundant and the tables and dishes covered over with a strange, luminous integument of coarse blue gauze; and where several little boys and girls, who had risen late, were seated in fastidious solitude at the morning repast. These young persons had not the morning paper before them, but they were engaged in languid perusal of the bill of fare.

This latter document was a great puzzle to our friends, who, on reflecting that its bewildering categories had relation to breakfast alone, had an uneasy prevision of an encyclopædic dinner-list. They found a great deal of entertainment at the hotel, an enormous wooden structure, for the erection of which it seemed to them that the virgin forests of the West must have been terribly deflowered. It was perforated from end to end with immense bare corridors, through which a strong draught was blowing—bearing along wonderful figures of ladies in white morning-dresses and clouds of Valenciennes lace, who seemed to float down the long vistas with expanded furbelows, like angels spreading their wings. In

front was a gigantic verandah, upon which an army might have encamped—a vast wooden terrace, with a roof as lofty as the nave of a cathedral. Here our young Englishmen enjoyed, as they supposed, a glimpse of American society, which was distributed over the measureless expanse in a variety of sedentary attitudes, and appeared to consist largely of pretty young girls, dressed as if for a *féte champêtre*, swaying to and fro in rocking-chairs, fanning themselves with large straw fans, and enjoying an enviable exemption from social cares. Lord Lambeth had a theory, which it might be interesting to trace to its origin, that it would be not only agreeable, but easily possible, to enter into relations with one of these young ladies; and his companion found occasion to check the young nobleman's colloquial impulses.

"You had better take care," said Percy Beaumont, "or you will have an offended father or brother pulling out a bowie-knife."

"I assure you it is all right," Lord Lambeth replied. "You know the Americans come to these big hotels to make acquaintances."

"I know nothing about it, and neither do you," said his kinsman, who, like a clever man, had begun to perceive that the observation of American society demanded a readjustment of one's standard.

"Hang it, then, let's find out!" cried Lord Lambeth with some impatience. "You know, I don't want to miss anything."

"We will find out," said Percy Beaumont, very reasonably. "We will go and see Mrs. Westgate and make all the proper inquiries."

And so the two inquiring Englishmen, who had this lady's address inscribed in her husband's hand upon a card, descended from the verandah of the big hotel and took their way, according to direction, along a large straight road, past a series of fresh-looking villas, embosomed in shrubs and flowers and enclosed in an ingenious variety of wooden palings. The morning was brilliant and cool, the villas were smart and snug, and the walk of the young travellers was very entertaining. Everything looked as if it had received a coat of fresh paint the day before—the red roofs, the green shutters, the clean, bright browns and buffs of the house-fronts. The flower-beds on the little lawns seemed to sparkle in the radiant air, and the gravel in the short carriage-sweeps to flash and twinkle. Along the road came a hundred little basket-phaetons, in which, almost always, a couple of ladies were sitting—ladies in white dresses and long white gloves, holding the reins and looking at the two Englishmen, whose nationality was not elusive, through thick blue veils, tied tightly about their faces as if to guard their complexions. At last the young men came within sight of the sea again, and then, having interrogated a gardener over the paling of a villa, they turned into an open gate. Here they found themselves face to face with the ocean and with a very picturesque structure, resembling a magnified *chalet*, which was perched upon a green embankment just above it. The house had a verandah of extraordinary width all around it, and a great many doors and windows standing open to the verandah. These various

apertures had, in common, such an accessible, hospitable air, such a breezy flutter, within, of light curtains, such expansive thresholds and reassuring interiors, that our friends hardly knew which was the regular entrance, and, after hesitating a moment, presented themselves at one of the windows. The room within was dark, but in a moment a graceful figure vaguely shaped itself in the rich-looking gloom, and a lady came to meet them. Then they saw that she had been seated at a table, writing, and that she had heard them and had got up. She stepped out into the light ; she wore a frank, charming smile, with which she held out her hand to Percy Beaumont.

"Oh, you must be Lord Lambeth and Mr. Beaumont," she said. "I have heard from my husband that you would come. I am extremely glad to see you." And she shook hands with each of her visitors. Her visitors were a little shy, but they had very good manners ; they responded with smiles and exclamations, and they apologised for not knowing the front door. The lady rejoined, with vivacity, that when she wanted to see people very much she did not insist upon those distinctions, and that Mr. Westgate had written to her of his English friends in terms that made her really anxious. "He said you were so terribly prostrated," said Mrs. Westgate.

"Oh, you mean by the heat ?" replied Percy Beaumont. "We were rather knocked up, but we feel wonderfully better. We had such a jolly —a—voyage down here. It's so very good of you to mind."

"Yes, it's so very kind of you," murmured Lord Lambeth.

Mrs. Westgate stood smiling ; she was extremely pretty. "Well, I did mind," she said ; "and I thought of sending for you this morning, to the Ocean House. I am very glad you are better, and I am charmed you have arrived. You must come round to the other side of the piazza." And she led the way, with a light, smooth step, looking back at the young men and smiling.

The other side of the piazza was, as Lord Lambeth presently remarked, a very jolly place. It was of the most liberal proportions, and with its awnings, its fanciful chairs, its cushions and rugs, its view of the ocean, close at hand, tumbling along the base of the low cliffs whose level tops intervened in lawnlike smoothness, it formed a charming complement to the drawing-room. As such it was in course of use at the present moment ; it was occupied by a social circle. There were several ladies and two or three gentlemen, to whom Mrs. Westgate proceeded to introduce the distinguished strangers. She mentioned a great many names, very freely and distinctly ; the young Englishmen, shuffling about and bowing, were rather bewildered. But at last they were provided with chairs—low, wicker chairs, gilded and tied with a great many ribbons—and one of the ladies (a very young person, with a little snub nose and several dimples) offered Percy Beaumont a fan. The fan was also adorned with pink love-knots ; but Percy Beaumont declined it, although he was very hot. Presently, however, it became cooler ; the

breeze from the sea was delicious, the view was charming, and the people sitting there looked exceedingly fresh and comfortable. Several of the ladies seemed to be young girls, and the gentlemen were slim, fair youths, such as our friends had seen the day before in New York. The ladies were working upon bands of tapestry, and one of the young men had an open book in his lap. Beaumont afterwards learned from one of the ladies that this young man had been reading aloud—that he was from Boston and was very fond of reading aloud. Beaumont said it was a great pity that they had interrupted him; he should like so much (from all he had heard) to hear a Bostonian read. Couldn't the young man be induced to go on?

"Oh no," said his informant, very freely; "he wouldn't be able to get the young ladies to attend to him now."

There was something very friendly, Beaumont perceived, in the attitude of the company; they looked at the young Englishmen with an air of animated sympathy and interest; they smiled, brightly and unanimously, at everything either of the visitors said. Lord Lambeth and his companion felt that they were being made very welcome. Mrs. Westgate seated herself between them, and, talking a great deal to each, they had occasion to observe that she was as pretty as their friend Littledale had promised. She was thirty years old, with the eyes and the smile of a girl of seventeen, and she was extremely light and graceful, elegant, exquisite. Mrs. Westgate was extremely spontaneous. She was very frank and demonstrative, and appeared always—while she looked at you delightedly, with her beautiful young eyes,—to be making sudden confessions and concessions, after momentary hesitations.

"We shall expect to see a great deal of you," she said to Lord Lambeth, with a kind of joyous earnestness. "We are very fond of Englishmen here; that is, there are a great many we have been fond of. After a day or two you must come and stay with us; we hope you will stay a long time. Newport's a very nice place when you come really to know it, when you know plenty of people. Of course, you and Mr. Beaumont will have no difficulty about that. Englishmen are very well received here; there are almost always two or three of them about. I think they always like it, and I must say I should think they would. They receive ever so much attention. I must say I think they sometimes get spoiled; but I am sure you and Mr. Beaumont are proof against that. My husband tells me you are a friend of Captain Littledale; he was such a charming man. He made himself most agreeable here, and I am sure I wonder he didn't stay. It couldn't have been pleasanter for him in his own country. Though I suppose it is very pleasant in England, for English people. I don't know myself; I have been there very little. I have been a great deal abroad, but I am always on the Continent. I must say I'm extremely fond of Paris; you know we Americans always are; we go there when we die. Did you ever hear that before? that was said by a great wit, I mean the good Americans; but we are

all good ; you'll see that for yourself. All I know of England is London, and all I know of London is that place—on that little corner, you know, where you buy jackets—jackets with that coarse braid and those big buttons. They make very good jackets in London, I will do you the justice to say that. And some people like the hats ; but about the hats I was always a heretic ; I always got my hats in Paris. You can't wear an English hat—at least, I never could—unless you dress your hair à l'*Anglaise* ; and I must say that is a talent I have never possessed. In Paris they will make things to suit your peculiarities ; but in England I think you like much more to have—how shall I say it?—one thing for everybody. I mean as regards dress. I don't know about other things ; but I have always supposed that in other things everything was different. I mean according to the people—according to the classes, and all that. I am afraid you will think that I don't take a very favourable view ; but you know you can't take a very favourable view in Dover Street, in the month of November. That has always been my fate. Do you know Jones's Hotel in Dover Street? That's all I know of England. Of course, every one admits that the English hotels are your weak point. There was always the most frightful fog ; I couldn't see to try my things on. When I got over to America—into the light—I usually found they were twice too big. The next time I mean to go in the season ; I think I shall go next year. I want very much to take my sister ; she has never been to England. I don't know whether you know what I mean by saying that the Englishmen who come here sometimes get spoiled. I mean that they take things as a matter of course—things that are done for them. Now, naturally, they are only a matter of course when the Englishmen are very nice. But, of course, they are almost always very nice. Of course, this isn't nearly such an interesting country as England ; there are not nearly so many things to see, and we haven't your country life. I have never seen anything of your country life ; when I am in Europe I am always on the Continent. But I have heard a great deal about it ; I know that when you are among yourselves in the country you have the most beautiful time. Of course, we have nothing of that sort, we have nothing on that scale. I don't apologise, Lord Lambeth ; some Americans are always apologising ; you must have noticed that. We have the reputation of always boasting and bragging and waving the American flag ; but I must say that what strikes me is that we are perpetually making excuses and trying to smooth things over. The American flag has quite gone out of fashion ; it's very carefully folded up, like an old tablecloth. Why should we apologise? The English never apologise—do they? No, I must say I never apologise. You must take us as we come—with all our imperfections on our heads. Of course we haven't your country life, and your old ruins, and your great estates, and your leisure-class, and all that. But if we haven't, I should think you might find it a pleasant change—I think any country is pleasant where they have pleasant manners. Captain Littledale told

me he had never seen such pleasant manners as at Newport; and he had been a great deal in European society. Hadn't he been in the diplomatic service? He told me the dream of his life was to get appointed to a diplomatic post in Washington. But he doesn't seem to have succeeded. I suppose that in England promotion—and all that sort of thing—is fearfully slow. With us, you know, it's a great deal too fast. You see I admit our drawbacks. But I must confess I think Newport is an ideal place. I don't know anything like it anywhere. Captain Littledale told me he didn't know anything like it anywhere. It's entirely different from most watering-places; it's a most charming life. I must say I think that when one goes to a foreign country, one ought to enjoy the differences. Of course there are differences; otherwise what did one come abroad for? Look for your pleasure in the differences, Lord Lambeth; that's the way to do it; and then I am sure you will find American society—at least Newport society—most charming and most interesting. I wish very much my husband were here; but he's dreadfully confined to New York. I suppose you think that is very strange—for a gentleman. But you see we haven't any leisure-class."

Mrs. Westgate's discourse, delivered in a soft, sweet voice, flowed on like a miniature torrent and was interrupted by a hundred little smiles, glances, and gestures, which might have figured the irregularities and obstructions of such a stream. Lord Lambeth listened to her with, it must be confessed, a rather ineffectual attention, although he indulged in a good many little murmurs and ejaculations of assent and deprecation. He had no great faculty for apprehending generalisations. There were some three or four indeed which, in the play of his own intelligence, he had originated, and which had seemed convenient at the moment; but at the present time he could hardly have been said to follow Mrs. Westgate as she darted gracefully about in the sea of speculation. Fortunately she asked for no especial rejoinder, for she looked about at the rest of the company as well, and smiled at Percy Beaumont, on the other side of her, as if he too must understand her and agree with her. He was rather more successful than his companion; for besides being, as we know, cleverer, his attention was not vaguely distracted by close vicinity to a remarkably interesting young girl, with dark hair and blue eyes. This was the case with Lord Lambeth, to whom it occurred after a while that the young girl with blue eyes and dark hair was the pretty sister of whom Mrs. Westgate had spoken. She presently turned to him with a remark which established her identity.

"It's a great pity you couldn't have brought my brother-in-law with you. It's a great shame he should be in New York in these days."

"Oh yes; it's so very hot," said Lord Lambeth.

"It must be dreadful," said the young girl.

"I daresay he is very busy," Lord Lambeth observed.

"The gentlemen in America work too much," the young girl went on.

"Oh, do they? I daresay they like it," said her interlocutor.

"I don't like it. One never sees them."

"Don't you, really?" asked Lord Lambeth. "I shouldn't have fancied that."

"Have you come to study American manners?" asked the young girl.

"Oh, I don't know. I just came over for a lark. I haven't got long." Here there was a pause, and Lord Lambeth began again. "But Mr. Westgate will come down here, will not he?"

"I certainly hope he will. He must help to entertain you and Mr. Beaumont."

Lord Lambeth looked at her a little with his handsome brown eyes. "Do you suppose he would have come down with us, if we had urged him?"

Mr. Westgate's sister-in-law was silent a moment, and then—"I daresay he would," she answered.

"Really!" said the young Englishman. "He was immensely civil to Beaumont and me," he added.

"He is a dear good fellow," the young lady rejoined. "And he is a perfect husband. But all Americans are that," she continued, smiling.

"Really!" Lord Lambeth exclaimed again; and wondered whether all American ladies had such a passion for generalising as these two.

He sat there a good while: there was a great deal of talk; it was all very friendly and lively and jolly. Everyone present, sooner or later, said something to him, and seemed to make a particular point of addressing him by name. Two or three other persons came in, and there was a shifting of seats and changing of places; the gentlemen all entered into intimate conversation with the two Englishmen, made them urgent offers of hospitality and hoped they might frequently be of service to them. They were afraid Lord Lambeth and Mr. Beaumont were not very comfortable at their hotel—that it was not, as one of them said, "so private as those dear little English inns of yours." This last gentleman went on to say that unfortunately, as yet, perhaps, privacy was not quite so easily obtained in America as might be desired; still, he continued, you could generally get it by paying for it; in fact, you could get everything in America nowadays by paying for it. American life was certainly growing a great deal more private; it was growing very much like England. Everything at Newport, for instance, was thoroughly private; Lord Lambeth would probably be struck with that. It was also represented to the strangers that it mattered very little whether their hotel was agreeable, as everyone would want them to make visits; they would stay with other people, and, in any case, they would be a great deal at Mrs. Westgate's. They would find that very charming; it was the pleasantest house in Newport. It was a pity Mr. Westgate was always away; he was a man of the highest ability—very acute, very acute. He worked like a horse and he left his wife—well,

to do about as she liked. He liked her to enjoy herself, and she seemed to know how. She was extremely brilliant, and a splendid talker. Some people preferred her sister; but Miss Alden was very different; she was in a different style altogether. Some people even thought her prettier, and, certainly, she was not so sharp. She was more in the Boston style; she had lived a great deal in Boston and she was very highly educated. Boston girls, it was propounded, were more like English young ladies.

Lord Lambeth had presently a chance to test the truth of this proposition; for on the company rising in compliance with a suggestion from their hostess that they should walk down to the rocks and look at the sea, the young Englishman again found himself, as they strolled across the grass, in proximity to Mrs. Westgate's sister. Though she was but a girl of twenty, she appeared to feel the obligation to exert an active hospitality; and this was perhaps the more to be noticed as she seemed by nature a reserved and retiring person, and had little of her sister's fraternising quality. She was perhaps rather too thin, and she was a little pale; but as she moved slowly over the grass, with her arms hanging at her sides, looking gravely for a moment at the sea and then brightly, for all her gravity, at him, Lord Lambeth thought her at least as pretty as Mrs. Westgate and reflected that if this was the Boston style the Boston style was very charming. He thought she looked very clever; he could imagine that she was highly educated; but at the same time she seemed gentle and graceful. For all her cleverness, however, he felt that she had to think a little what to say; she didn't say the first thing that came into her head; he had come from a different part of the world and from a different society, and she was trying to adapt her conversation. The others were scattering themselves near the rocks; Mrs. Westgate had charge of Percy Beaumont.

"Very jolly place, isn't it?" said Lord Lambeth. "It's a very jolly place to sit."

"Very charming," said the young girl; "I often sit here; there are all kinds of cosy corners—as if they had been made on purpose."

"Ah! I suppose you have had some of them made," said the young man.

Miss Alden looked at him a moment. "Oh no, we have had nothing made. It's pure nature."

"I should think you would have a few little benches—rustic seats and that sort of thing. It might be so jolly to sit here, you know," Lord Lambeth went on.

"I am afraid we haven't so many of those things as you," said the young girl, thoughtfully.

"I daresay you go in for pure nature, as you were saying. Nature, over here, must be so grand, you know." And Lord Lambeth looked about him.

The little coast-line hereabouts was very pretty, but it was not at all grand; and Miss Alden appeared to rise to a perception of this fact.

"I am afraid it seems to you very rough," she said. "It's not like the coast scenery in Kingsley's novels."

"Ah, the novels always overdo it, you know," Lord Lambeth rejoined. "You must not go by the novels."

They were wandering about a little on the rocks, and they stopped and looked down into a narrow chasm where the rising tide made a curious bellowing sound. It was loud enough to prevent their hearing each other, and they stood there for some moments in silence. The young girl looked at her companion, observing him attentively, but covertly, as women, even when very young, know how to do. Lord Lambeth repaid observation; tall, straight, and strong, he was handsome as certain young Englishmen, and certain young Englishmen almost alone, are handsome; with a perfect finish of feature and a look of intellectual repose and gentle good temper which seemed somehow to be consequent upon his well-cut nose and chin. And to speak of Lord Lambeth's expression of intellectual repose is not simply a civil way of saying that he looked stupid. He was evidently not a young man of an irritable imagination; he was not, as he would himself have said, tremendously clever; but, though there was a kind of appealing dulness in his eye, he looked thoroughly reasonable and competent, and his appearance proclaimed that to be a nobleman, an athlete, and an excellent fellow, was a sufficiently brilliant combination of qualities. The young girl beside him, it may be attested without further delay, thought him the handsomest young man she had ever seen; and Bessie Alden's imagination, unlike that of her companion, was irritable. He, however, was also making up his mind that she was uncommonly pretty.

"I daresay it's very gay here—that you have lots of balls and parties," he said; for, if he was not tremendously clever, he rather prided himself on having, with women, a sufficiency of conversation.

"Oh yes, there is a great deal going on," Bessie Alden replied. "There are not so many balls, but there are a good many other things. You will see for yourself; we live rather in the midst of it."

"It's very kind of you to say that. But I thought you Americans were always dancing."

"I suppose we dance a good deal; but I have never seen much of it. We don't do it much, at any rate, in summer. And I am sure," said Bessie Alden, "that we don't have so many balls as you have in England."

"Really!" exclaimed Lord Lambeth. "Ah, in England it all depends, you know."

"You will not think much of our gaieties," said the young girl, looking at him with a little mixture of interrogation and decision which was peculiar to her. The interrogation seemed earnest and the decision seemed arch; but the mixture, at any rate, was charming. "Those things, with us, are much less splendid than in England."

"I fancy you don't mean that," said Lord Lambeth, laughing.

"I assure you I mean everything I say," the young girl declared.

"Certainly, from what I have read about English society, it is very different."

"Ah, well, you know," said her companion, "those things are often described by fellows who know nothing about them. You mustn't mind what you read."

"Oh, I *shall* mind what I read!" Bessie Alden rejoined. "When I read Thackeray and George Eliot, how can I help minding them?"

"Ah, well, Thackeray—and George Eliot," said the young nobleman; "I haven't read much of them."

"Don't you suppose they know about society?" asked Bessie Alden.

"Oh, I daresay they know; they were so very clever. But these fashionable novels," said Lord Lambeth, "they are awful rot, you know."

His companion looked at him a moment with her dark blue eyes, and then she looked down in the chasm where the water was tumbling about. "Do you mean Mrs. Gore, for instance?" she said presently, raising her eyes.

"I am afraid I haven't read that either," was the young man's rejoinder, laughing a little and blushing. "I am afraid you'll think I am not very intellectual."

"Reading Mrs. Gore is no proof of intellect. But I like reading everything about English life—even poor books. I am so curious about it."

"Aren't ladies always curious?" asked the young man, jestingly.

But Bessie Alden appeared to desire to answer his question seriously. "I don't think so—I don't think we are enough so—that we care about many things. So it's all the more of a compliment," she added, "that I should want to know so much about England."

The logic here seemed a little close; but Lord Lambeth, made conscious of a compliment, found his natural modesty just at hand. "I am sure you know a great deal more than I do."

"I really think I know a great deal—for a person who has never been there."

"Have you really never been there?" cried Lord Lambeth. "Fancy!"

"Never—except in imagination," said the young girl.

"Fancy!" repeated her companion. "But I daresay you'll go soon, won't you?"

"It's the dream of my life!" declared Bessie Alden, smiling.

"But your sister seems to know a tremendous lot about London," Lord Lambeth went on.

The young girl was silent a moment. "My sister and I are two very different persons," she presently said. "She has been a great deal in Europe. She has been in England several times. She has known a great many English people."

"But you must have known some, too," said Lord Lambeth.

"I don't think that I have ever spoken to one before. You are the first Englishman that—to my knowledge—I have ever talked with."

Bessie Alden made this statement with a certain gravity—almost, as it seemed to Lord Lambeth, an impressiveness. Attempts at impressiveness always made him feel awkward, and he now began to laugh and swing his stick. "Ah, you would have been sure to know!" he said. And then he added, after an instant—"I'm sorry I am not a better specimen."

The young girl looked away; but she smiled, laying aside her impressiveness. "You must remember that you are only a beginning," she said. Then she retraced her steps, leading the way back to the lawn, where they saw Mrs. Westgate come towards them with Percy Beaumont still at her side. "Perhaps I shall go to England next year," Miss Alden continued; "I want to, immensely. My sister is going to Europe, and she has asked me to go with her. If we go, I shall make her stay as long as possible in London."

"Ah, you must come in July," said Lord Lambeth. "That's the time when there is most going on."

"I don't think I can wait till July," the young girl rejoined. "By the first of May I shall be very impatient." They had gone further, and Mrs. Westgate and her companion were near them. "Kitty," said Miss Alden, "I have given out that we are going to London next May. So please to conduct yourself accordingly."

Percy Beaumont wore a somewhat animated—even a slightly irritated—air. He was by no means so handsome a man as his cousin, although in his cousin's absence he might have passed for a striking specimen of the tall, muscular, fair-bearded, clear-eyed Englishman. Just now Beaumont's clear eyes, which were small and of a pale grey colour, had a rather troubled light, and, after glancing at Bessie Alden while she spoke, he rested them upon his kinsman. Mrs. Westgate meanwhile, with her superfluously pretty gaze, looked at every one alike.

"You had better wait till the time comes," she said to her sister. "Perhaps next May you won't care so much about London. Mr. Beaumont and I," she went on, smiling at her companion, "have had a tremendous discussion. We don't agree about anything. It's perfectly delightful."

"Oh, I say, Percy!" exclaimed Lord Lambeth.

"I disagree," said Beaumont, stroking down his back hair, "even to the point of not thinking it delightful."

"Oh, I say!" cried Lord Lambeth again.

"I don't see anything delightful in my disagreeing with Mrs. Westgate," said Percy Beaumont.

"Well, I do!" Mrs. Westgate declared; and she turned to her sister. "You know you have to go to town. The phaeton is there. You had better take Lord Lambeth."

At this point Percy Beaumont certainly looked straight at his kinsman; he tried to catch his eye. But Lord Lambeth would not look at him; his own eyes were better occupied. "I shall be very happy,"

cried Bessie Alden. "I am only going to some shops. But I will drive you about and show you the place."

"An American woman who respects herself," said Mrs. Westgate, turning to Beaumont with her bright expository air, "must buy something every day of her life. If she cannot do it herself, she must send out some member of her family for the purpose. So Bessie goes forth to fulfil my mission."

The young girl had walked away, with Lord Lambeth by her side, to whom she was talking still; and Percy Beaumont watched them as they passed towards the house. "She fulfills her own mission," he presently said; "that of being a very attractive young lady."

"I don't know that I should say very attractive," Mrs. Westgate rejoined. "She is not so much that as she is charming when you really know her. She is very shy."

"Oh indeed?" said Percy Beaumont.

"Extremely shy," Mrs. Westgate repeated. "But she is a dear good girl; she is a charming species of girl. She is not in the least a flirt; that isn't at all her line; she doesn't know the alphabet of that sort of thing. She is very simple—very serious. She has lived a great deal in Boston, with another sister of mine—the eldest of us—who married a Bostonian. She is very cultivated, not at all like me—I am not in the least cultivated. She has studied immensely and read everything; she is what they call in Boston 'thoughtful'."

"A rum sort of girl for Lambeth to get hold of!" his lordship's kinsman privately reflected.

"I really believe," Mrs. Westgate continued, "that the most charming girl in the world is a Boston superstructure upon a New York *fonds*; or perhaps a New York superstructure upon a Boston *fonds*. At any rate it's the mixture," said Mrs. Westgate, who continued to give Percy Beaumont a great deal of information.

Lord Lambeth got into a little basket-phæton with Bessie Alden, and she drove him down the long avenue, whose extent he had measured on foot a couple of hours before, into the ancient town, as it was called in that part of the world, of Newport. The ancient town was a curious affair—a collection of fresh-looking little wooden houses, painted white, scattered over a hill-side and clustered about a long, straight street, paved with enormous cobble-stones. There were plenty of shops—a large proportion of which appeared to be those of fruit-vendors, with piles of huge water-melons and pumpkins stacked in front of them; and, drawn up before the shops, or bumping about on the cobble-stones, were innumerable other basket-phætons freighted with ladies of high fashion, who greeted each other from vehicle to vehicle and conversed on the edge of the pavement in a manner that struck Lord Lambeth as demonstrative—with a great many "Oh, my dears," and little quick exclamations and caresses. His companion went into seventeen shops—he amused himself with counting them—and accumulated, at the bottom of the phæton,

a pile of bundles that hardly left the young Englishman a place for his feet. As she had no groom nor footman, he sat in the phaeton to hold the ponies ; where, although he was not a particularly acute observer, he saw much to entertain him—especially the ladies just mentioned, who wandered up and down with the appearance of a kind of aimless intentness, as if they were looking for something to buy, and who, tripping in and out of their vehicles, displayed remarkably pretty feet. It all seemed to Lord Lambeth very odd, and bright, and gay. Of course, before they got back to the villa, he had had a great deal of desultory conversation with Bessie Alden.

The young Englishmen spent the whole of that day and the whole of many successive days in what the French call the *intimité* of their new friends. They agreed that it was extremely jolly—that they had never known anything more agreeable. It is not proposed to narrate minutely the incidents of their sojourn on this charming shore ; though if it were convenient I might present a record of impressions none the less delectable that they were not exhaustively analysed. Many of them still linger in the minds of our travellers, attended by a train of harmonious images—images of brilliant mornings on lawns and piazzas that overlooked the sea ; of innumerable pretty girls ; of infinite lounging and talking and laughing and flirting and lunching and dining ; of universal friendliness and frankness ; of occasions on which they knew everyone and everything and had an extraordinary sense of ease ; of drives and rides in the late afternoon, over gleaming beaches, on long sea-roads, beneath a sky lighted up by marvellous sunsets ; of suppers, on the return, informal, irregular, agreeable ; of evenings at open windows or on the perpetual verandahs, in the summer starlight, above the warm Atlantic. The young Englishmen were introduced to everybody, entertained by everybody, intimate with everybody. At the end of three days they had removed their luggage from the hotel, and had gone to stay with Mrs. Westgate—a step to which Percy Beaumont at first offered some conscientious opposition. I call his opposition conscientious because it was founded upon some talk that he had had, on the second day, with Bessie Alden. He had indeed had a good deal of talk with her, for she was not literally always in conversation with Lord Lambeth. He had meditated upon Mrs. Westgate's account of her sister, and he discovered, for himself, that the young lady was clever and appeared to have read a great deal. She seemed very nice, though he could not make out that, as Mrs. Westgate had said, she was shy. If she was shy she carried it off very well.

"Mr. Beaumont," she had said, "please tell me something about Lord Lambeth's family. How would you say it in England?—his position."

"His position?" Percy Beaumont repeated.

"His rank—or whatever you call it. Unfortunately we haven't got a 'Peerage,' like the people in Thackeray."

"That's a great pity," said Beaumont. "You would find it all set forth there so much better than I can do it."

"He is a Peer, then?"

"Oh yes, he is a Peer."

"And has he any other title than Lord Lambeth?"

"His title is the Marquis of Lambeth," said Beaumont; and then he was silent; Bessie Alden appeared to be looking at him with interest.

"He is the son of the Duke of Bayswater," he added, presently.

"The eldest son?"

"The only son."

"And are his parents living?"

"Oh yes; if his father were not living he would be a duke."

"So that when his father dies," pursued Bessie Alden, with more simplicity than might have been expected in a clever girl, "he will become Duke of Bayswater?"

"Of course," said Percy Beaumont. "But his father is in excellent health."

"And his mother?"

Beaumont smiled a little. "The Duchess is uncommonly robust."

"And has he any sisters?"

"Yes, there are two."

"And what are they called?"

"One of them is married. She is the Countess of Pimlico."

"And the other?"

"The other is unmarried; she is plain Lady Julia."

Bessie Alden looked at him a moment. "Is she very plain?"

Beaumont began to laugh again. "You would not find her so handsome as her brother," he said; and it was after this that he attempted to dissuade the heir of the Duke of Bayswater from accepting Mrs. Westgate's invitation. "Depend upon it," he said, "that girl means to try for you."

"It seems to me you are doing your best to make a fool of me," the modest young nobleman answered.

"She has been asking me," said Beaumont, "all about your people and your possessions."

"I am sure it is very good of her!" Lord Lambeth rejoined.

"Well, then," observed his companion, "if you go, you go with your eyes open."

"Damn my eyes!" exclaimed Lord Lambeth. "If one is to be a dozen times a day at the house, it is a great deal more convenient to sleep there. I am sick of travelling up and down this beastly Avenue."

Since he had determined to go, Percy Beaumont would of course have been very sorry to allow him to go alone; he was a man of conscience, and he remembered his promise to the Duchess. It was obviously the memory of this promise that made him say to his com-

panion a couple of days later, that he rather wondered he should be so fond of that girl.

"In the first place, how do you know how fond I am of her?" asked Lord Lambeth. "And in the second place why shouldn't I be fond of her?"

"I shouldn't think she would be in your line."

"What do you call my 'line'?" You don't set her down as 'fast'?"

"Exactly so. Mrs. Westgate tells me that there is no such thing as the 'fast girl' in America; that it's an English invention, and that the term has no meaning here."

"All the better. It's an animal I detest."

"You prefer a blue-stocking."

"Is that what you call Miss Alden?"

"Her sister tells me," said Percy Beaumont, "that she is tremendously literary."

"I don't know anything about that. She is certainly very clever."

"Well," said Beaumont, "I should have supposed you would have found that sort of thing awfully slow."

"In point of fact," Lord Lambeth rejoined, "I find it uncommonly lively."

After this, Percy Beaumont held his tongue; but on August 10th he wrote to the Duchess of Bayswater. He was, as I have said, a man of conscience, and he had a strong, incorruptible sense of the proprieties of life. His kinsman, meanwhile, was having a great deal of talk with Bessie Alden—on the red sea-rocks beyond the lawn; in the course of long island rides, with a slow return in the glowing twilight; on the deep verandah, late in the evening. Lord Lambeth, who had stayed at many houses, had never stayed at a house in which it was possible for a young man to converse so frequently with a young lady. This young lady no longer applied to Percy Beaumont for information concerning his lordship. She addressed herself directly to the young nobleman. She asked him a great many questions, some of which bored him a little; for he took no pleasure in talking about himself.

"Lord Lambeth," said Bessie Alden, "are you an hereditary legislator?"

"Oh, I say," cried Lord Lambeth, "don't make me call myself such names as that."

"But you are a member of Parliament," said the young girl.

"I don't like the sound of that, either."

"Doesn't your father sit in the House of Lords?" Bessie Alden went on.

"Very seldom," said Lord Lambeth.

"Is it an important position?" she asked.

"Oh dear no," said Lord Lambeth.

"I should think it would be very grand," said Bessie Alden, "to possess, simply by an accident of birth, the right to make laws for a great nation."

"Ah, but one doesn't make laws. It's a great humbug."

"I don't believe that," the young girl declared. "It must be a great privilege, and I should think that if one thought of it in the right way—from a high point of view—it would be very inspiring."

"The less one thinks of it the better," Lord Lambeth affirmed.

"I think it's tremendous," said Bessie Alden; and on another occasion she asked him if he had any tenantry. Hereupon it was that, as I have said, he was a little bored.

"Do you want to buy up their leases?" he asked.

"Well—have you got any livings?" she demanded.

"Oh, I say!" he cried. "Have you got a clergyman that is looking out?" But she made him tell her that he had a Castle; he confessed to but one. It was the place in which he had been born and brought up, and, as he had an old-time liking for it, he was beguiled into describing it a little and saying it was really very jolly. Bessie Alden listened with great interest, and declared that she would give the world to see such a place. Whereupon—"It would be awfully kind of you to come and stay there," said Lord Lambeth. He took a vague satisfaction in the circumstance that Percy Beaumont had not heard him make the remark I have just recorded.

Mr. Westgate, all this time, had not, as they said at Newport, "come on." His wife more than once announced that she expected him on the morrow; but on the morrow she wandered about a little, with a telegram in her jewelled fingers, declaring it was very tiresome that his business detained him in New York; that he could only hope the Englishmen were having a good time. "I must say," said Mrs. Westgate, "that it is no thanks to him if you are!" And she went on to explain, while she continued that slow-paced promenade which enabled her well-adjusted skirts to display themselves so advantageously, that unfortunately in America there was no leisure-class. It was Lord Lambeth's theory, freely propounded when the young men were together, that Percy Beaumont was having a very good time with Mrs. Westgate, and that under the pretext of meeting for the purpose of animated discussion, they were indulging in practices that imparted a shade of hypocrisy to the lady's regret for her husband's absence.

"I assure you we are always discussing and differing," said Percy Beaumont. "She is awfully argumentative. American ladies certainly don't mind contradicting you. Upon my word I don't think I was ever treated so by a woman before. She's so devilish positive."

Mrs. Westgate's positive quality, however, evidently had its attractions; for Beaumont was constantly at his hostess's side. He detached himself one day to the extent of going to New York to talk over the Tennessee Central with Mr. Westgate; but he was absent only forty-eight hours, during which, with Mr. Westgate's assistance, he completely settled this piece of business. "They certainly do things quickly in New York," he observed to his cousin; and he added that Mr. West-

gate had seemed very uneasy lest his wife should miss her visitor—he had been in such an awful hurry to send him back to her. “I’m afraid you’ll never come up to an American husband—if that’s what the wives expect,” he said to Lord Lambeth.

Mrs. Westgate, however, was not to enjoy much longer the entertainment with which an indulgent husband had desired to keep her provided. On August 21st Lord Lambeth received a telegram from his mother, requesting him to return immediately to England; his father had been taken ill, and it was his filial duty to come to him.

The young Englishman was visibly annoyed. “What the deuce does it mean?” he asked of his kinsman. “What am I to do?”

Percy Beaumont was annoyed as well; he had deemed it his duty, as I have narrated, to write to the Duchess, but he had not expected that this distinguished woman would act so promptly upon his hint. “It means,” he said, “that your father is laid up. I don’t suppose it’s anything serious; but you have no option. Take the first steamer; but don’t be alarmed.”

Lord Lambeth made his farewells; but the few last words that he exchanged with Bessie Alden are the only ones that have a place in our record. “Of course I needn’t assure you,” he said, “that if you should come to England next year, I expect to be the first person that you inform of it.”

Bessie Alden looked at him a little and she smiled. “Oh, if we come to London,” she answered, “I should think you would hear of it.”

Percy Beaumont returned with his cousin, and his sense of duty compelled him, one windless afternoon, in mid-Atlantic, to say to Lord Lambeth that he suspected that the Duchess’s telegram was in part the result of something he himself had written to her. “I wrote to her—as I explicitly notified you I had promised to do—that you were extremely interested in a little American girl.”

Lord Lambeth was extremely angry, and he indulged for some moments in the simple language of indignation. But I have said that he was a reasonable young man, and I can give no better proof of it than the fact that he remarked to his companion at the end of half an hour—“You were quite right after all. I am very much interested in her. Only, to be fair,” he added, “you should have told my mother also that she is not—seriously—interested in me.”

Percy Beaumont gave a little laugh. “There is nothing so charming as modesty in a young man in your position. That speech is a capital proof that you are sweet on her.”

“She is not interested—she is not!” Lord Lambeth repeated.

“My dear fellow,” said his companion, “you are very far gone.”

the article and other Islands off and near the coast of Africa had
been at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century. Some of
the islands were then described as being of great extent, the
largest being about 100 miles long and 20 miles wide, and
the others being smaller.

The Sun's Long Streamers.

PROFESSOR CLEVELAND ABBE, an American astronomer and meteorologist, who had intended to observe the eclipse of the sun last July from the summit of Pike's Peak, in Colorado, more than 14,000 feet above the sea-level, fell ill after he had reached that place, and was carried down to the Lake House (elevation 10,000 feet), there to remain while the rest of his party stayed to view the eclipse from the summit. Probably if he had remained with them his observations would have differed in no very marked degree from those which other astronomers made on that occasion. He would have devoted a few seconds, perhaps, to the study of the sun's corona with the naked eye. He would probably have made some telescopic, spectroscopic, or polariscope observations during the rest of the three minutes during which the total eclipse lasted, and possibly he might have noted some feature rather more effectively and satisfactorily than most of the other observers. But under the actual circumstances he could not hope thus to take his place among the thousands of observers who have noted the phenomena of total solar eclipses. He had no optical or other instrument. Worse than all, he is near-sighted; and though he had a pair of spectacles, it was not quite strong enough to correct his near-sightedness.

Yet Professor Abbe succeeded in making observations far exceeding in interest any which were made by the entire force of eclipse observers in 1874 and 1875, and fairly comparable in this respect with the most remarkable discoveries effected during the great eclipses of 1868, 1869, 1870, and 1871. Debarred from instrumental researches, unable to do what most observers of eclipses seem anxious to do—namely, to see everything that can be seen—he was compelled to restrict himself to precisely that line of observation which we indicated eight years ago as likely to be most instructive. He gave his whole attention to the corona, and especially to its outlying and feebler portions. Studying the phenomena with the naked eye, or at least with only spectacles to aid him, he could recognise faint luminosity which the telescope would inevitably have concealed from his view. He was not hurried; nor was he disturbed by the thought that such and such instruments must be attended to in turn while still totality lasted, with care also that in the darkness nothing should be disturbed or injured. As he said after the observations were completed, and as we pointed out in 1870, “a glance of a few seconds will no more suffice to do justice to the delicate phenomena [of the corona] than it would suffice to enable a naturalist to draw

the distinguishing features of a new shell or insect, or would enable an artist to correctly sketch in a landscape."

Before describing what Professor Abbe actually saw, it may be well to indicate first the nature of the observations he proposed to make, and secondly his preconceived ideas as to what he was likely to see, for otherwise the value of his observations will not be fully appreciated.

Our readers may perhaps remember that in the year 1870 a discussion took place on the question whether the glory of light seen around the sun during total eclipse belongs to the sun or not. There were those who maintained very confidently the opinion that this glory is either a purely optical phenomenon only or else is due to the passage of the solar rays through our own atmosphere all round the place of the eclipsed sun. On the other hand, there were some (ourselves among the number) who pointed out that the corona must necessarily belong to the sun, since its features could not possibly be reconciled with any other theory. The greater number of astronomers seemed, however, to form no opinion one way or the other, but to prefer to leave the matter to be decided by fresh evidence. For too many imagine that the best way of showing how greatly they value observations is by declining to investigate the full significance of observations already made.

It will be remembered that before long the new observations devised to settle a question which had been abundantly answered by observations already made proved unmistakably the solar nature of the corona. Photographs were taken during the total eclipse of December 1870, and in greater number during that of December 1871. On the latter occasion photographic views of the corona taken at stations far apart agreed closely together, showing that the corona could not possibly be an atmospheric phenomenon. No one could imagine that the air above Baicull, where Mr. Davis (Lord Lindsay's photographer) took his views, could by some amazing accident produce coronal features resembling those produced by the air above Ootacamund, one station being close to the sea-shore, the other hundreds of miles inland and some 10,000 feet above the sea-level. On the other hand, the resemblance of the several views taken at either station showed that the coronal glory could not be due to the illumination of some matter on the hither side of the moon, but far outside our own atmosphere. For the solar rays, passing athwart the lunar disc to fall upon such matter, would shift rapidly in position as the moon moved onwards, so that the features seen at the beginning of total eclipse would differ markedly from those seen towards the end. Since the six pictures taken at Baicull closely resembled each other, as did the six taken at Ootacamund, so that all twelve views represented the same corona (though of course not all to the same distance from the sun), it was manifest that the corona then seen was a solar appendage. The actual distance to which the corona can be traced in these pictures corresponds to about 900,000 miles. But the believers in an atmospheric corona were not even yet wholly

satisfied. Nay, before the recent total eclipse one among them even went so far as to say that the observations and photographs of 1870 and 1871, while demonstrating the solar nature of the glory immediately surrounding the sun, proved the long rays extending much farther from the sun to be non-solar phenomena. "The non-solar origin of the radial structure," said Mr. Lockyer as late as July 20 last, "was conclusively established" during the eclipse of December 1871.

To say the truth, there is no possible way of interpreting the long rays as phenomena of our own atmosphere or of matter (gaseous, meteoric, or dust-like) on the hither side of the moon. The idea is one which mathematicians may casually have thrown out. Indeed, Mädler and Airy, after the eclipse of 1860, advanced the hypothesis that the long rays belong to matter between us and the moon, while Sir John Herschel adopted in his *Familiar Lectures* the notion that these rays belong to matter at a great height in our own atmosphere. But it would be to misrepresent these eminent astronomers to assert that they ever *maintained* these views. The available evidence, analysed as any one of these mathematicians could have analysed it, had he seen fit, would have shown convincingly that the rays must come from matter lying far beyond the moon. Sir John Herschel admitted this in a letter addressed to the present writer. Whether Airy or Mädler ever examined the evidence closely we do not know. If they did they doubtless were led to the same result as Sir J. Herschel. The matter may be put in this way:—Since these long rays extend from the black disc of the moon during mid-totality, they occupy then a part of the sky where no sun-illuminated air lies at such a time; therefore they cannot belong to our air: but if there were some very tenuous matter, aërial or dust-like, extending as far as the moon's orbit, the whole region of the sky athwart which these rays extend would contain matter of this sort under full solar illumination; no rays then would be seen, but a nearly uniform glare, which should become brighter and brighter as the distance from the sun's place increased. If we add to this that at midnight the whole of the sky, except a round spot some four or five times the diameter of the moon, would be occupied by this *cis-lunar* matter under direct solar illumination, instead of that illumination from behind which such matter would receive during total eclipse, we see that the darkness of our midnight sky speaks as decisively against this theory as does the brightness of the long rays seen during total eclipse.

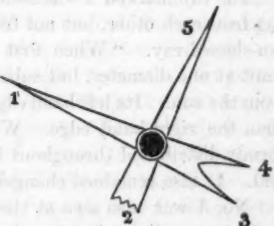
Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence available to show that these rays lie far beyond the moon, Professor Abbe had adopted the opinion that the rays belong to the earth's atmosphere, or else are mere optical illusions. "I had hitherto firmly believed them," he says, "to be either in the earth's atmosphere or in the observer's eyes." "Such rays," he adds, "were seen by members of my eclipse party at Sioux Falls City, Dakota, August 1869; but at that time and ever since I have doubted their existence." It is manifest that he did not begin his

observations with the preconceived idea that the rays belong to matter far more distant than the moon, but with a strong opinion, if not a strong prejudice, the other way.

Next let us consider the actual circumstances under which he observed the eclipse, for they also are important in enabling us to estimate the value of his result. "Having been somewhat hastily carried," he says, "from the summit of Pike's Peak down to the Lake House (elevation 10,000 feet), I had by Monday noon recovered sufficiently to be laid on the ground upon a gentle slope facing westwards, where I studied the rays visible about the sun during totality. I had no optical or other instrument, and unfortunately had only a pair of spectacles not quite sufficient even to correct my near-sightedness. By straining my eyes somewhat I was, however, able to do something. My whole attention was given to the rays that extended beyond the brilliant ring which I presume represents the true solar atmosphere. I was undisturbed by any other consideration except to get a true presentation of these rays. . . . I went over the region around the sun again and again—at least six times—leisurely during the 161 seconds of totality, and cannot doubt the truthfulness and fairness of my drawing and description. . . . Two stakes were driven down on either side of me; and between them was placed a rotatable axis, on which my drawing-board and paper were fastened. . . . By slightly tipping my drawing-board I kept the sun just above it, or just hidden from view, as I wished, while I drew in such details as I wished, and that too, as it seemed to me at the time, with great ease and accuracy, especially as to the angular position of the rays."

The moon or sun appeared surrounded by a narrow brilliant white ring, less than 140,000 miles broad. (We alter the technical indication of apparent breadth into the actual breadth in miles as likely to be more intelligible to most of our readers.) This ring was as brilliant as the full moon. It was of uniform tint and light, continuous and without any break or structure visible to Professor Abbe. "Outside of this there was no other concentric coronal appearance and no external boundary; but the immaculate blue black sky immediately adjoined this light, which I now call the true solar corona or atmosphere." There was throughout plenty of light to read and write by, though very different from that given by the full moon.

The picture which accompanies Professor Abbe's description in the *Colorado Springs Daily Gazette* is doubtless not intended to present with any accuracy the actual tints or degrees of brightness of the various features observed. The shape of the streamers is shown with sufficient exactness in the accompanying figure. It will be



Illustrating the rays seen round the eclipsed sun by Professor Abbe.

understood, of course, that the rays numbered were seen on a dark background, the "immaculate blue" of Abbe's description.

The tapering ray marked No. 1 was the first seen by him. He says he saw it on his first glance at the corona. It then seemed to extend about three times the diameter of the sun; but in a minute or so, as the observer's eyes became accustomed to the sight, he was able to trace its tapering end to a distance of six diameters of the sun's disc. "Its sides were straight lines, its axis passing slightly below the sun's centre. Its light was an exceedingly faint and delicate white, apparently overlaid or intermingled with the blue of the atmosphere. I saw no striation, texture, or variation of light. There was no decided increase of brightness in that part of the ray near the sun's edge, nor in the axis of the beam, the delicate light continuing uniform up to the corona, in whose glare it was lost." We must note here two points. In all probability the words "in a minute or so" are used in their colloquial sense for *presently*, because the whole totality did not last two minutes and half, and in the course of that time Professor Abbe noted all the features of the corona six several times. Secondly, we find that both in the *Daily News* and in *Nature* Professor Abbe is described as tracing the rays to a distance of six degrees from the eclipsed sun, not six diameters only; so that, as the sun's apparent diameter is little more than half a degree, these accounts would suggest that he saw the rays to double the distance described in the *Colorado Daily Gazette*. But there seems little reason to doubt that the accounts given in the *Daily News* and *Nature*, which constitute in reality but one account, seeing that they both came from the same source, are incorrect; for the account sent to the Colorado paper was written by Professor Abbe himself. It contains an illustration from a drawing of his own (reproduced above), which agrees with his description. Moreover, we received the paper directly from Professor Abbe; and unquestionably he would have struck out the word "diameters" and substituted "degrees" if he had really seen the ray extending to the greater distance. Note also that the word "diameter" is used throughout the descriptions of other rays.

The ray marked 2 was seen as soon as 1. Its bounding edges, diverging from each other, but not from the sun's centre, produced a somewhat fan-shaped ray. "When first seen," says Abbe, "I estimated its outer limit at one diameter, but subsequently traced it to a diameter and a half from the sun. Its left-hand edge appeared somewhat sharper and brighter than the right-hand edge. With this exception the light was very uniformly distributed throughout its surface, fading away rapidly at its outer end. It also remained changeless throughout the totality."

No. 3 was also seen at the same time as No. 1. "It was narrower and shorter than No. 1: its estimated length, three diameters. It broadened at its base, like No. 1, and had the same uniform tint and intensity."

No. 4 "was not noticed at all until the totality was half over. Its

length was one diameter, and it was certainly brighter at the end farthest from the sun. It remained perfectly steady," adds Professor Abbe, "after I once noticed it, and gradually I became aware of a faint light partially connecting it with No. 3, so that the final impression left on me was that these two constituted one fan-shaped projection similar to No. 2, but fading out in the central portions. The axis of No. 1 and of Nos. 3 and 4 passed nearly, if not exactly, through the sun's centre."

No. 5 extended fully five diameters from the sun's limb, "and was in all respects similar to No. 1. Its base was broader than that of No. 1, which I attributed," says Abbe, "to the glare of the increasing corona" and of a mound of the ruddy prominence matter (low-lying, so as to form only an extension of the sierra). The light of No. 5 was fainter, Professor Abbe thought, than that of No. 1. "Its edges were straight, except in so far as the coronal glare appeared to unduly broaden the base. Its axis passed very nearly through the sun's centre, and was in the prolongation of the axis of No. 2."

Professor Abbe's explanation of these rays or streamers occurred to him an hour or so after seeing them. He advances it as one which "will probably result in the overthrow of all previously entertained theories respecting the character and cause of these streams of light." But in reality it is not nearly so novel as he seems to imagine. It is, indeed, partly new, and in our opinion it is in great part true; but what is true in it is not new, and we question greatly whether what is new in it can possibly be true. Let astronomers judge.

"Meteor streams," says Professor Abbe, "is the key to the solution—not such meteors as some suppose to be falling into the sun daily, but the grand streams of meteors that cause the numerous shooting stars of August and November, and of the existence of which there is indubitable proof. These streams consist of fine particles or pieces, each a long way from its neighbour, but all rushing along in parallel orbits about the sun, like the falling drops of rain in a thunder-shower. The August stream is calculated to be several hundred thousand miles broad and thick, and many million miles long. Such a stream, when far beyond the sun, but still lighted up by it, would reflect to us a faint uniform light precisely like that of these rays. If one end of the stream were farther from us than the other, the effect of the perspective would be to produce a tapering or wedge-shaped appearance. In some other part of our orbit, or with the meteor stream in some other part of its orbit, the perspective might vanish and the two ends appear of the same width. In this way we shall undoubtedly be able to explain the very numerous historical and memorable occasions on which flaming coronas, swords, comets, &c., seen in the sky during a total eclipse have been regarded by the superstitious as Divine omens."

We have very little doubt that the great extension of the corona in certain directions during many total eclipses, and the probably far greater extension of a fainter, not readily discerned lustre during all eclipses, is

due to the existence of meteor streams. It is also undoubtedly true that several of the meteor systems encountered by our earth in her journey round the sun have the vast dimensions mentioned by Professor Abbe. Indeed, he far underrates the dimensions of the August and November meteor systems, each of which must be measured in length by hundreds of millions of miles, not by mere millions. But it is absolutely impossible that any of the meteor systems traversed by our earth, or any meteor systems of no greater degree of richness, should present the appearance of streamers surrounding the sun, like those in our figure above. So far as the two systems specially mentioned by Professor Abbe are concerned, inasmuch as we know the exact shape and position of the orbits along which the meteors forming these systems travel, we can determine the exact position which the meteoric streams occupy in the heavens at any moment; and most certainly neither of them on July 29 last occupied the position of the two beams shown across the sun in our figure. The August system was the one which at the time passed nearest to the sun's place on the sky, but it did not come within several degrees of the sun. The November system did not even cross the part of the sky where the sun was. These two systems, therefore, could not possibly be connected in any way with the two streams, of whatever nature, which produced the rays intersecting exactly at the sun.

But there is a more general objection to the theory that such meteor systems may explain coronal streamers seen during total eclipses of the sun. If such streams could be seen when situated beyond the sun, they would be seen far better when opposite the sun on the dark background of the midnight sky. Take, for instance, the November meteors. We know that the flight of meteors, some 2,000 millions of miles long, which the earth traversed in November 1866, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870, and 1871, is now nearing the remotest part of the long orbit of the November system, many millions of miles beyond the path of Uranus. We know that at midnight in winter the richest part of that system lies due south, at an elevation varying from thirty to fifty degrees above the horizon. There, illuminated fully by the sun, though at a great distance from him, it ought to be far better seen than a similar system lying beyond the sun and visible only through the light of the brightest part of the corona. But no one has ever, on the darkest and clearest night and under the most favourable atmospheric conditions, even suspected the existence of the faintest possible light where the heart of the November system is really situated. Much less, then, could such a system be seen during total eclipse (if so situated as to lie athwart the sun). Systems less rich than the November system (the richest known to us) would have still less chance of being discerned.

If, then, we are to account for the radial streamers seen by Professor Abbe, and also seen during many other total eclipses, though to a less distance, by the meteoric theory, we must consider meteor systems very

unlike those through which the earth herself passes. The meteor systems required by the theory must be much denser and much more brightly illuminated than the August and November systems. To say they must be much more brightly illuminated is equivalent to saying that they must be much nearer the sun. And in this we see an escape from another difficulty. Meteor systems very near the sun would be far more likely to appear as streamers extending radially from him than systems at a great distance from him. A distant system might, by a mere chance, so appear. For instance, if a total eclipse of the sun had occurred on or about May 10, 1865, the November meteor-system (whose richest part was then crossing the earth's track at the point she occupies on November 13) would have appeared, if discernible at all, as a streak athwart the sun's place in the sky, and therefore forming two rays on opposite sides of him, somewhat like 2 and 5 in our figure. Sixteen years or so earlier or later the November system would present a similar appearance, only very much fainter, on account of greatly increased distance, during a total eclipse occurring on or about November 13. At no other time in the year except November 13 and May 10, or about these dates, could the November system present such an appearance. But a system travelling close to the sun, and not far from the plane near which all the planets travel, would present at all times nearly the appearance of a pair of rays like 2 and 5 of our figure. On this account, therefore, as well as on account of the greater brightness with which such meteor systems would be illuminated, we must prefer the theory that the systems to which the coronal rays are due travel near to the sun.

Yet, even as thus presented, the meteor theory alone seems inadequate to explain the coronal streamers. There is an enormous mass of evidence showing that meteor systems are most richly strewn throughout a region around the sun, extending nearly to the distance of the planet Mercury; but there is also abundant reason for believing that these multitudinous systems would present an appearance very different from that depicted in Professor Abbe's view of the coronal streamers. We want something quite distinct from the theory of a mere aggregation of meteors to account for these rays, whether pointed or fan-shaped, extending directly from the sun. The aggregation of meteors might present the appearance of a luminous cloud around the place of the eclipsed sun. This cloud might be to some degree radiated, because each meteor system would have a course carrying it either directly athwart the sun's place on the sky, or nearly so. But there would be nothing like those sharply-defined streamers extending separately from the sun to distances of ten or twelve sun-breadths. Sir George Airy, describing the appearance of the corona during the eclipse of 1851, pictures just such a cloud as we should expect to result from the aggregation of meteors. "Its colour," he said, "was white, or resembling that of Venus; there was no flickering or unsteadiness; it was not separated from the moon, nor had it any annular structure: it looked like a radiated luminous cloud

behind the moon." The long streamers manifestly require a different explanation.

We cannot but think that the true explanation of these streamers, whatever it may be (we are not in the least prepared to say what it is), will be found whenever astronomers have found an explanation of comets' tails. These singular appendages, like the streamers seen by Professor Abbe, extend directly from the sun, as if he exerted some repellent action on the matter forming the heads of comets. Indeed, Sir John Herschel did not hesitate to say that the existence of such a repulsive force was, to all intents and purposes, demonstrated by the phenomena of comets' tails. Now we know that meteors and comets are in some way associated, though the actual nature of the connection between them is not clear. It is certain that the November meteors, the August meteors, and other such systems, follow in the track of known comets. We know that when, in 1862, the earth passed through the region of space along which Biela's comet had recently travelled, there was a display of thousands of meteors, all radiating from just that part of the heavens from which bodies travelling parallel to the orbit of Biela's comet would have seemed to radiate. It follows from this association between comets and meteors, and from the fact that probably thousands of meteoric and cometic systems travel close to the sun, that in all probability there must exist generally, if not always, in the sun's neighbourhood, enormous quantities of the substance whence comets' tails are formed by the sun's repellent action. This being so, we should expect to find generally, if not always, long streams of matter extending from the sun's immediate neighbourhood, in the same way that comets' tails extend from comets' heads. Whether the repulsive force is electrical, magnetic, or otherwise, does not at present concern us; or rather it does concern us, but at present we are quite unable to answer the question. All that we know certainly is that, in the first place, the sun does in some way cause streams of luminous matter to appear beyond the heads of comets, in a direction opposite to his own, and to enormous distances; and, in the second place, that the matter forming comets' heads is probably present at all times, in large quantities, in the sun's immediate neighbourhood. We can hence infer, with extreme probability, that such long streamers as Abbe saw last July, Myer in August 1869, Feilitzsch in June 1860, and several Swedish observers during the eclipse of 1733, are produced in the same way as comets' tails, and therefore really extend (as they seem to do) radially from the sun. It is also certain that if they did not really extend radially from the sun, their always seeming to do so would be altogether inexplicable. So that the theory to which we are led in one direction leads us also out of what would else be a very perplexing difficulty in another direction.

Three Burmese Heroines.

EVERY visitor to Burma has seen a native play, or, at least, has heard the outcome of its orchestra. A night or two after his arrival at Rangoon he is strolling back from his club or mess, when a noise of tangled music comes in occasional wafts from Kemendine or Ahlön. On his reaching home the sound steals in with more precision and cadence through the open jilmils of the room, and he can even make out an intermittent murmur, which seems like laughter and loud applause. When he wakes at early dawn the music and murmur are still continuing, and his Madrassee boy will tell him, with sleepy eyes, what happened last night at the Burmese "pwê." Or cooped in a native boat, bamboo-floored and bamboo-thatched, he has been creeping up the winding channel of the Sittoung, on his way to the distant frontier station. He has escaped the perils of the Kayasu creek, and all the weary afternoon has had nothing to do but watch the crumbling banks as they slowly pass on either side, or his four boatmen cheerful and incessant, poling sturdily on against the stream. Toward sunset they moor him off a narrow spit of sand, and after a bath in the muddy water, disappear in the direction of the clump of mango and tamarind trees which screen the hamlet where they expect their supper. An hour later the moon has clambered nearly overhead, and once again our traveller hears a quaint discord of drum and cymbal and flageolet. This time, no doubt, he determines to explore, and, ascending the bank, soon finds himself in the middle of the village with all the inhabitants, men, women and children, grouped in a circle at some little distance. In the centre is what seems to him like a plantain-tree, with wood-oil torches flaring round the base. To the east are seated the orchestra and those members of the company who, for the moment, are not "on the boards." The ladies with the help of hand mirrors are arranging their hair or powdering their faces, while the gentlemen are probably asleep. An open space around the tree, about ten feet deep, is the actual proscenium, the only limits being the ring of spectators, who are all of them sitting on the ground. At present the overture is going on, and there is leisure to observe the instruments at work. The most important is evidently a series of drums, suspended around a circular wooden frame nearly three feet high and four feet across. The operator sits inside and plays almost as one would on a piano. There are, besides, one or two flageolets of wretched tone and construction, a pair of cymbals, and some bamboo clappers of very simple manufacture, which are mostly used to mark the time. However, at present, like the rest of the band, they are making a

tremendous din. Faster and faster grow the beats, and louder the uproar. It is the signal for the king's appearance—the imposing prelude to every Burman play.

The first thing that will strike the visitor is the utter absence of all theatrical adjuncts. There is no curtain but a dingy wrapper which is used to screen the heroine during a single episode in the piece; there is no scenery but the plantain-tree, and no stage property but a wooden chair. Nor has the costume any compensating effects. There are barely enough tinsel and trappings to distinguish the king from the clown; the "minthami" (princess) from the maid of honour. A youth with a yellow kerchief around his head, a white linen jacket, a silk waistcloth, and a curved stick in his hand to represent a bow, gets up from the ground where he has been squatting, and advances into the ring with slow and stately gait, and a curious waving of his arm and hand. He is a very prince for the nonce, both to himself and to the villagers around. (They all know he is only "ko hpyu, or ko māi," that the middle-aged woman he woos with regal compliments is not the daughter of the monarch of Wethali, but a strolling player from Yemethen. There is absolutely nothing external to help the illusion.) The plot is slovenly, disjointed, and obscure; the main incidents and characters are common to every native drama. And yet they will listen to the lad with serious, almost reverential attention, while he declaims in ornate language about his ancestry, his attributes, and his exploits; they will encourage him in his courtship, sympathise with the afflicted pair during their separation, and, after sitting the whole night through, will yet at early dawn be open-eyed and eager to applaud the happy *dénouement*. The traveller will find the above by no means a solitary instance. At several halting places on his route the boatmen, after all their hard day's work, will sit up half the night at a rustic play. Fifty years ago every considerable village had a troupe of actors who performed at all the popular junkettings. In these days of free intercommunication their place is very largely taken by strolling companies from Upper Burma, who come down after the rains are fairly ended, and return at the close of the hot season. They penetrate everywhere in their rambles, and it is rare indeed that even the most secluded villager does not witness a "zāt" or puppet-show twice or thrice in the year. . . . This passion for histrionics is, perhaps, the most striking trait of the national character. It is genuine and simple enough of its kind, and, in a great measure, results from a true dramatic instinct. A Burman playgoer admires a clear flexible voice infinitely more than a pretty face, and graceful style and action more than a shapely form. Youth and beauty are quite minor recommendations. The prima donna, "Yendaw ma hay," who at present reigns supreme in Upper and Lower Burma, is a lady about forty-five. The king sent her down to perform at Rangoon on the Imperial Proclamation day, when I had the honour of an introduction. She could never have been pretty, even according to Burmese ideas, and yet she

was courted by powerful nobles, and finally married a veritable prince. Her attractions are best described by the vernacular word "yinthi," of which "elegant" is the nearest English equivalent. Of course, to a stranger her voice, attitude, and gesture, were more or less uncomely and extravagant. One can relish the easy laughter-moving by-play of the clown (an invariable character in a Burmese drama), and now and again, in the long recitativo of the heroine, one can catch a few bars of the refrain which somewhat correspond with western notions of harmony and method. But, on the whole, it requires as much education of taste to appreciate native acting as it does to enjoy the flavour of those other provincial specialities, the dorian fruit and "ngapee."

There are, of course, abundance of other amusements in a country of sturdy peasant proprietors, where there exist none of the usual Oriental trammels of caste, and class, and creed. The rudiments of boxing, wrestling, football, hockey, and boat-racing have long been familiar to every Burman, and to English visitors this athleticism contrasts delightfully with the flaccid apathy of Lower Bengal. But a play or puppet-show is, no doubt, the chief recreation of prince and peasant, partly from intellectual tendencies, and partly from the religious sanction which such entertainments are supposed to possess. The national "zât," as the name implies, is theoretically a representation of one of the 550 existences (*jâtakas*) of Gautama. It corresponds, therefore, more or less exactly, with a mystery or miracle play of the Middle Ages. Nowadays, though a native dramatist does not confine himself to scripture history, he is always lavish with "Tipitaka" allusions, and as his auditory obtain "merit" from the mere act of listening to the sacred word, the religious element is still to some extent conserved. The hero is generally a prince of one of the kingdoms of the "masshima Dessa," or great central region of Northern India. He obtains leave of absence from his father, and proceeds to make the grand tour of the period, which consisted in an uncomfortable pilgrimage through some demon-haunted jungle. Here he has a variety of adventures, and, among other things, encounters a casual princess, whom he courts and marries in approved Burman fashion. The rest of the story is occupied with the trials and vicissitudes of the pair, who always, however, become king and queen somewhere before the end of the piece. With slight variation, this outline would stand as the plot of half the dramas performed in the country.

But the trio of ladies whom I have chosen to commemorate are not, as I hope, the idle figments of Oriental romance, but real flesh-and-blood heroines, who lived and loved in dim old days, amid a dim old people, of whose history the world even now has very little knowledge or record. There is nothing especially remarkable about their story. The charm and tenderness of each episode is mostly derived from its sudden contrast with the wars, and triumphs, and slaughters which are chronicled around it. This idyllic flavour is lost, of course, when the scenes are detached from their picturesque setting and surroundings. The Burmese

playwright who originally made their names familiar to his countrymen, found their lives enshrined in the pages of his national history, the *Mahārāzawen*. Sir Arthur Phayre, I believe, was the first to give Orientalists some idea of this marvellous chronicle, which traces the lineage of an Indo-Chinese dynasty up to Mahā Thamata, the first elective monarch of mankind. There are several awkward breaks, no doubt, in the succession, and little credibility can be placed in what is exclusively a palace record. Yet a Burman believes as fervently in the glories of Dwattaboung and Anaurahta as an Englishman in King Alfred or Queen Elizabeth, and much of his extravagant reverence for royalty is owing to the glamour and glory with which tradition still surrounds the white umbrella and the throne.

In one respect, at least, the *Rāzawen* is genuine enough. It contains the purest Burmese a student can hope to find, and it is written throughout with a clearness, vigour, and simplicity, which remind you more of Herodotus than an Eastern historian. The edition I have made use of is the latest one produced. It was compiled about forty-five years ago, under the patronage and direction of King Bhāgyeedau, in the Hman Nan chamber of the palace, whence it got the name of the "Hman Nan," or "Crystal Palace" version. It is difficult to speak too highly of the skill, discretion, and industry with which the revising committee accomplished their task. They collated all the existing MSS., besides comparing them with stone inscriptions, ancient ballads, and monastery records, a vast store of which were accumulated by the royal order. They were thus able to correct or verify several important dates, and introduce some uniformity into several conflicting legends. Furthermore, they have not hesitated to omit the most absurd and exaggerated of mediæval myths, and from their matter-of-fact comments and criticism, have lent a singular air of verisimilitude to the whole chronicle. It is from this source the present narrative has been obtained, and in many parts I have done little more than translate the original word for word from the Burmese.

The first great Burmese kingdom was at Tagoung, or Upper Pugan. This double city, the ruins of which still exist but have never been properly explored, was colonised by a Solar Prince of Gautama's family, who immigrated from Northern India. He had thirty-two successors, the last of whom was expelled by a Tartar invasion. Just at this time, however, a fresh Prince of the same dynasty arrived from India with his followers. He espoused the queen of his predecessor and re-established the Tagoung kingdom. The sixteenth monarch in descent from him was Maharaja Menggyee, the last of the line, whose reign commenced about the year 490 B.C. Shortly after his accession he sent his brother-in-law the Crown Prince to slay a mighty boar which was devastating all the country. The huntsman, after a lengthy and laborious chase, slew his quarry on an island near Prome, which is known even now as "Wek-hto-chyun," "the island where the boar was pierced." The Prince then considered he was a great way off from his country, and

if he returned without the spoil the king would not believe in his exploit. And even if his valour were recognised he would enjoy but a transitory renown. His prime of life had passed, and it was best to provide for future welfare. So he became a recluse and wore the yellow robe. And it chanced one day that a doe whose haunts were near his cave left on the ground a little female child. The hermit adopted it, sucking it from the tips of his fore and middle fingers, and gave it the name of "Bhedari," from its having been found in a cleft of the rock. As the years went on the girl grew beautiful exceedingly, and was endowed with the five graces of women. And the old man thought, "It is not fit that others should see her with me;" and each morning he bade her take a gourd and fill it at the stream which ran through the forest. But the gourd had just one tiny hole through which the water could barely trickle, and it was only at nightfall that the maiden could return. Meantime the queen-mother at Tagoung had given birth to two blind sons. The king was greatly angered at this, and ordered that both should be destroyed. But the queen kept them for some years in secret, and finally sent them floating down the river which flowed past the royal city. On their arrival at Sagaing an ogress came on board whom the lads compelled by force to remove their blindness. They then resumed their journey down the stream till they saw a flock of cranes cross the river overhead. Landing at the spot where the birds had disappeared, the elder brother noticed the footprints of a woman on the sand, and followed them till he came to where Bhedari was sitting with the gourd. The lad wondered at her beauty and her dress, for the "Nats" (devas) had clothed her with shining apparel. But when he saw what she was doing he drew a little nearer, and said, "Lady, there is no hole in the gourd." So taking it up, he prepared it suitably with his golden sword. His saying still survives as a common proverb. Bhedari having filled the vessel returned quickly to the hermit and told him all that had happened. He bade her remain within while he went out to question the young man, for he did not know they were his sister's sons. Then Bhedari prayed the Nats, "May the young man surely come;" and she poured out the water from the gourd, and placed fruit and rice for them to eat. But when the hermit returned there were two young men with him, and both were comely and like each other. And the girl was ashamed, for she knew not whom she had met. Then holding out the gourd, she said, "The hole is even now too small;" whereupon the elder Prince again put forth his hand, and Bhedari knew that he would be her lord. And the lad said, "If I obtain a palace and a kingdom, give me the maiden as my wife and queen." His uncle promised; and Bhedari was glad, and plighted him her troth.

I regret that the rest of the story is hardly in keeping with this tender forest scene. Our hero accomplished his end in no very heroic fashion. There happened to be a convenient queen in the neighbour-

hood, and she was speedily induced by the recluse to accept the Prince as her lord and master. To one familiar with Western fiction, where the whole plot and passion of a book is made to turn on a rigid law of monogamy or hazardous deviations from monogamic requirements, an Eastern love tale seems very simple and unexciting. There can be no motive for an Oriental hero to waver throughout a volume and a half between two equally charming heroines. He can always solve the complication off-hand by marrying them both. Bhedari, however, had to wait some time before even this divided dignity could be obtained. For the time she found herself utterly forgotten, and had to pass through many formidable trials before she became the chief consort of the king. By some quaint law of reprisal she survived her husband, and marrying his brother became the mother of "Dwattaboung," the first and most famous monarch of the Prome or Tharekhettara dynasty. She died full of years and honour, and at her death the heavens became dark, and a blazing star appeared for seven days in the western quarter.

The empire at Prome continued for about 550 years, when the Pugārāma, or Lower Pugan monarchy, was established. Anaurahta-Men-Saw, who ruled about the year A.D. 1000, is the representative Prince of this line, and, as Sir Arthur Phayre observes, the great hero of the modern Burmese people. He introduced from Thatone the Buddhist religion as it now exists in the country, and extended and consolidated his dominions northwards as far as Bhamo, and south and east throughout the region of the Taleings. On his return from a huge expedition against China he passed through "the Nine Mau States," as the country of the Shans is called throughout the Pugan chronicle. The ruling chief came to pay his respects, and seeing Anaurahta among his four principal followers, was ignorant which was the king, and presented each with a gold-embroidered mat. But the monarch with a blow from his magic spear converted all the five into one, on which he took his seat. The "Sawbwā," amazed at this exhibition of power, gave him his daughter "Shinmonhla," and Anaurahta carried her with him to his royal palace at Pugan. She is described as exceedingly lovely, and had, moreover, a pair of ear-trinkets which contained a genuine relic of the Budh. The other queens, no doubt, were jealous of the beauty and favour the stranger enjoyed, and seeing the relic flash in her ear at night like a diamond star, they accused her to the king of being a sorceress and dealing with forbidden charms. Anaurahta believed the slander, and ordered the Princess to return to her home. She accordingly, after prostrating herself before the throne and the "Nats" who guarded the palace, passed out of the city with all her Shan attendants. The route she travelled is very minutely laid down, and it is only recently that I have ridden along part of the road. On the eleventh day she was resting on the banks of a stream which flows south of the present capital, when one of her ear-trinkets fell into the water. After a long and useless search the lady invoked divine assistance, when the jewel appeared

miraculously in the heavens amid a flock of hovering sparrows, and thence descended into its owner's hands. The Princess, unwilling that it should be profaned thereafter by vulgar use, sought for some materials to erect a shrine. The Nat king revealed to her a hidden store of bricks, and the girl with her attendants built a niched pagoda five cubits high, fronting the range of hills which rose in the east between her and her home, and therein she deposited the sacred relic.

Meantime, Anaurahta heard of all this at Pugan, and calling the two fleetest of his Indian runners, he bade them follow and observe in what position the pagoda was placed. If it fronted the south and the royal city they could quickly return; but if it was turned toward the Shan country they must slay the maiden wherever they met her. The messengers started at sunrise and reached the "Sparrow-circled Shrine" (as its name may be translated) long after dark on the following evening, exhausted with hunger and fatigue. Shimmonhla, who had been warned of their errand, furnished them with food and comfortable lodging, and induced them to wait till early dawn. Then at midnight she went out alone to the newly-erected pagoda, and fastening her handkerchief around its spire, she implored the Nat king to assist her in her terrible peril. Suddenly, yielding to her effort, the whole building moved slowly round till it faced the south and Pugaráma, and in the morning, when the messengers came to inspect it, they found they could leave the Princess unmolested. But the king's cruelty had done its work; Shimmonhla had no courage to bear up against this second blow, and scarcely had the men departed when she died of a broken heart at the foot of the shrine. The chronicle leaves untold this pitiful *dénouement*, but goes on to describe the splendour of the dagoba which Anaurahta himself and subsequent rulers enlarged and embellished. It still maintains its popularity, and at the moment I am writing crowds of Mandalay folk are streaming out to the yearly festival within its precincts. The Shans will, too, be there in all their clans, and men from Thonsé, Thénni, and Thibaw will fill the zayáts (resting-houses) around the pagoda, and listen once again to the well-known story.

Among the zayáts which fringe the ascent to the great Mahá-myat-máni pagoda at Mandalay there is one rather more spacious than the rest, hung round with pictures, the handiwork (if the signature is to be believed) of Saya Pho Kaing, royal painter to King Manisithu of Sagaing. They may have been presented by some Shan worshipper after the famous image had been brought by Aloungphaya from Arrakan, and in spite of their age the colours are still vivid, and the composition clear. They are all historical subjects, but the one most prominent among them is a painting of the Shan Princess lying at the foot of the Sparrow-circled Shrine, with her attendants in a tearful group around. The treatment is not inartistic, and the faces of the women and of the two Indian runners who are standing aloof convey a genuine impression of pathos. The kerchief is still drooping from the spire of the pagoda, and

in the background is the Nat king seated on a throne with placid, immovable face. For Shinmonbla has no doubt become a goddess within his realm, and her merit in due time will reap a yet more perfect reward.

Anaurahta had a son almost as illustrious as himself. The mother was a daughter of the ruler of Wethali, who had reluctantly surrendered his child to the great king's ambassadors. The chronicle depicts her as soft, delicate, and lovely, like newly-minted gold. Spite of these attractions, she fared as badly as the maiden from Shan land, and was banished from the palace in a fit of jealous rage. Shortly before her child was born there occurred a mighty earthquake, and Anaurahta was told by his black and white astrologers that a child was coming into the world who would be the future monarch of Pugan. After having repeated King Herod's method on a still more ruthless scale through several years, it occurred to the king to inquire if his kingdom was actually in danger from the lad. On being reassured on this point he sent for Kyansittha, who became his champion and companion on all his great expeditions. Some years later, however, he mortally offended the irritable despot, who had him straightway bound with bamboo cords, and hurled his famous spear with intent to slay him. The weapon, however, glanced aside, severing the ropes, and Kyansittha, snatching it up, rushed from the palace and fled into the thick forests which lay across the river. His father despatched seven Indian runners to seize him, but they were all slain by the magic spear. The fugitive, seeing there was no hope of mercy at home, fled further north, and after many days' wandering he reached a village where there dwelt an aged monk and his niece Sambula. The girl had long been assured of some high destiny, for it happened that once while picking cotton she had fallen asleep and a swarm of bees had settled on her robe. So her uncle instructed her that on a certain day a husband would come from the West, and that she must get good food and fair water ready to refresh him. And on the day foretold Kyansittha chanced to arrive, and seeing the maiden's beauty he asked for water and plucked some bitter tamarinds from a tree which grew within the garden. The rahān marvelled at seeing him eat, and desired some of the fruit at his hands. Tasting them, he found they had become sweet and luscious, with a fragrance like the fruit of the Nats, and he prompted Sambula to give the stranger all that he demanded. Then Kyansittha, having eaten and drunk, turned and said to the maiden, "You have given me food and drink, and I will give you my life in return." And he lived there in exile with her for many years. But after his father's death Kyansittha was invited back to court by his elder brother Saulu, who had succeeded to the throne. Before leaving he gave Sambula a ring, and charged her if she gave birth to a female child to sell the ring and provide for its maintenance; but if to a male, to bring it with the ring to the royal palace. And after a few years Saulu was slain by the King of Pegu,

and Kyansittha became monarch of Pugan, to the great joy of all the people. Meantime Sambula had become mother of a male child, and when it was seven years old she brought it on foot to the great city, and sought to show it to the king. But at the time of her arrival, footsore and faded after her long journey, Kyansittha was holding a review of all his soldiers, and not daring to enter the palace she sat down outside the gate, holding the child by the hand. The royal attendants addressed her insolently and bade her begone, until she supplicated them that she might be allowed to see the "golden foot." So they went in and told their master, and he gave orders straightway that the woman should be admitted. But when he saw her it was his wife Sambula, and he called her to him and praised her before all his nobles, and he gave her rich apparel and a palace and retinue, and placing the child on his knee he acknowledged him as his son, and mourned they should have been absent so many years. And the lad grew up in the palace, and when he became of age his father made him the ruler of Dhanyavati (Arrakan), where he reigned with great valour and renown.

One or other of these three narratives will be found in the *répertoire* of every company of players, and two common points of resemblance will be noticed. In a Burmese melodrama it is the lady who has the suffering and the struggle, the gentleman being generally very comfortable and indifferent throughout. This may be a relic from the older Aryan myths, where Sita, Damayanti, and Maddi Devi, the incomparable heroine of the *Wethantara Jātaka*, are notable types of womanly constancy and endurance. But it arises in a great measure also from the social independence of the sex, in which particular Burma contrasts favourably with even European communities. It is curious, however, to observe how women are invariably made to assume the leading characters in the popular drama. And a modern rôle of "minthami" (or prima donna) is a really very trying performance. I have followed the chronicle in omitting the details of my heroines' travels; but these, of course, are the principal "business" on the stage. The forests which the unfortunate wanderers have to traverse are full to repletion not only of bandits and wild beasts, but of

Gorgons, hydras, and chimaeras dire,

and other horrific samples of the Burmese pandemonium; and a "Bhilu" or "Galon" is sure to be met with at every turn of the road. They all have the most nefarious designs, and vent their disappointment in direct personal aggression. I have seen an actress most severely pummelled by a violent gentleman with a red mask and hobby-horse, who called himself a "Rekhaik," because she announced her unalterable devotion to her absent spouse. Occasionally even death is made to result from these savage assaults, when a *deus ex machina* appears in the shape of the Nat king on the wooden chair. In most cases, too, the situation is intensified by the poor lady being seized with the pangs of maternity

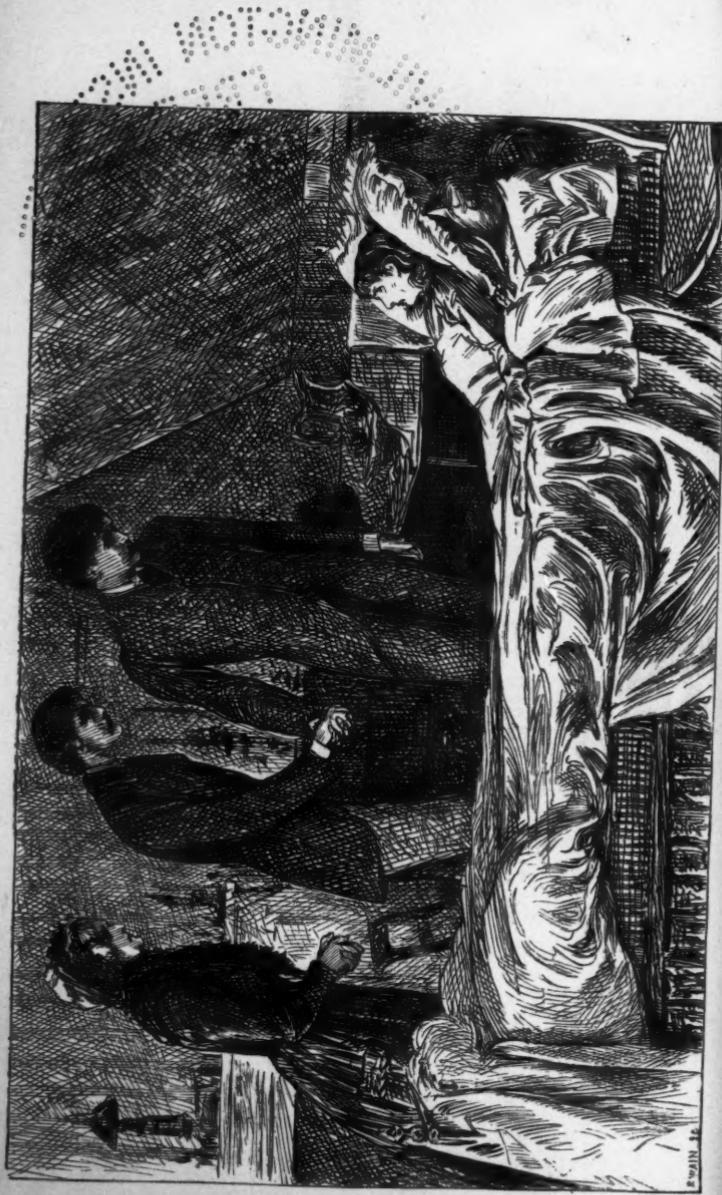
just after one of these encounters. It is simply an ingenious device for enabling the actress to get a little rest after her exertions, and there is absolutely nothing indecorous about it. A few years ago there was some discussion about the alleged immorality of native plays. It cannot be denied that one generally hears a certain amount of coarse language and *double-entendre*, but this is always "gag" introduced by the clowns and attendants, and is quite extraneous to the piece. In the acting itself there is rarely anything unseemly, and though a woman's dress in ordinary life is, to say the least, not calculated to avoid *exposés*, her stage costume is unexceptionable.

The second point of resemblance is still more characteristic. Each episode represents a girl of humble extraction (Shinmonhla was even worse off, being a foreigner) marrying a prince and becoming a veritable queen. Modern queens at Mandalay are in reality most unenviable beings, as they alone, among their countrywomen, are kept in strict seclusion with absolutely nothing to do. But to a Burmese damsel, to sit in a palace and be called "phaya," with a white umbrella and a score of attendants, appears the highest pinnacle of feminine happiness. And this pinnacle is still attainable by any young woman with decent looks and opportunities. Did not the mother of the present chief queen, when a simple bazaar-seller, attract royal attention and become a royal consort through her petticoat having been blown (some say *not* accidentally) within the royal precincts? All depends on "kan," that is, the state of your good-deeds-account, through all foregoing existences, as compared with your bad-deeds-account. As the "merit" outbalances the "demerit," so you will reap good fortune here. This explanation and justification, so to speak, of luck is quite the most inviting tenet of the whole Buddhist theosophy. No one, of course, has any conception of how his account actually stands, but it is quite possible that he may have a large balance to his credit and reap the reward the next visit that he pays to the palace. For the king, as the sole fountain of honour, naturally appears the great exponent and executant of fate. His fitful favour or aversion (with all the consequences each implies) are quite inexplicable on any other theory. To a Burman this chance and caprice is not unattractive, and has, in fact, done much to secure his acquiescence in the rule of as cruel a set of tyrants as ever handled an Eastern sceptre. And it is this element that he looks for in vain in the dull undeviating rhythm of our own *régime*, and it is to be feared that a "mahamengyee" * and municipalities will not wholly reconcile him to the loss.

H. L. ST. BARBE.

* The local title for Chief Commissioner.





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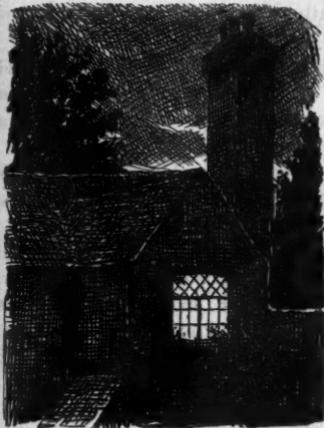
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“For Percival.”

CHAPTER L.

THROUGH THE NIGHT.



THE village clock struck five. As the last lingering stroke died upon the air, there was the sound of a carriage rapidly approaching. Carroll raised his head when it stopped at the gate, and saw Hardwicke spring out, and help a lady to alight. She was an old lady, who walked quickly to the house, looking neither to right nor left, and vanished within the doorway. Hardwicke stopped, as if to give some order to the driver, and then hurried after her. Archie stared vaguely, first at them, and then at the man, who turned his horses and went round to the stables. When they

were out of sight, he laid his head down again. The little scene had been a vivid picture, which stamped itself with curious distinctness on his brain, yet failed to convey any meaning whatever. He had not the faintest idea of the agony of love and fear in Mrs. Middleton's heart as she passed him. To Archie, just then, the whole universe was *his* agony, and there was no room for more.

Ten minutes later came Dr. Grey's brougham. The doctor, as he jumped out, told his man to wait. He went from the gate to the house more hurriedly than Mrs. Middleton, and his anxiety was more marked; but he found time to look round as he went, with keen eyes, which rested for an instant on the young sailor, though he lay half hidden by the bushes. He too vanished, as the others had vanished.

About an hour later he came out again, and Fothergill followed him. The doctor started when he encountered his eager eyes. Fothergill demanded his opinion. He began some of the usual speeches in which men wrap up the ghastly word “death” in such disguise that it can hardly be recognised.

The soldier cut him short: “Please to speak plain English, Dr. Grey.”

The doctor admitted the very greatest danger.

"Danger—yes," said Fothergill; "but is there any hope? I am not a fool—I shan't go in and scare the women—is there any hope?"

The answer was written on the doctor's face. He had known Sissy Langton from the time when she came, a tiny child, to Brackenhill. He shook his head, and murmured something about "even if there were no other injury—the spine—"

Fothergill caught a glimpse of a hideous possibility, and answered with an oath. It was not the profanity of the words, so much as the fury with which they were charged, that horrified the good old doctor. "My dear sir," he remonstrated gently, "we must remember that this is God's will."

"God's will—God's will! Are you sure it isn't the devil's?" said Fothergill. "It seems more like it. If you think it is God's will, you may persuade yourself it's yours, for aught I know. But I'm not such a damned hypocrite as to make believe it's mine."

And with a mechanical politeness, curiously at variance with his face and speech, he lifted his hat to the doctor, as he turned back to the farmhouse.

So Sissy's doom was spoken. To linger a few hours, more or less, in helpless pain, and then to die. The sun, which had dawned so joyously, was going down as serenely as it had dawned; but it did not matter much to Sissy now. She was sensible, she knew Mrs. Middleton. When the old lady stooped over her, she looked up, smiled faintly, and said, "I fell."

"Yes, my darling, I know," Aunt Harriet said.

"Can I go home?" Sissy asked, after a pause.

"No, dear, you must not think of it—you mustn't ask to go home."

"I thought not," said Sissy.

Mrs. Middleton asked her if she felt much pain.

"I don't know," she said, and closed her eyes.

Later, Henry Hardwicke sent in a message, and the old lady came out to speak to him. He was standing by an open casement in the passage, looking out at the sunset through the orchard boughs. "What is it, Harry?" she said.

He started, and turned round. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Middleton, but I thought in case you wanted to send any telegrams—if—if—I mean, I thought you might want to send some, and there is not very much time."

She put her hand to her head. "I ought to—oughtn't I?" she said. "Who should be sent for?"

"Mr. Hammond?" Hardwicke questioned, doubtfully.

Something like relief or pleasure lighted her sad eyes. "Yes—yes; send for Godfrey Hammond. He will come." She was about to leave him, but the young fellow stepped forward. "Mrs. Middleton!" Was

it the clear red light from the window that suddenly flushed his face ? "Mrs. Middleton, shall I send for Mr. Percival Thorne ? "

She stopped, looking strangely at him. Something in his voice surprised her. "For Percival ?" she said.

"May I ? I think he ought to come." The hot colour was burning on his cheeks. What right had he to betray the secret which he believed he had discovered ? And yet, could he stand by, and not speak for her, when she had so little time in which to speak for herself ?

"Is it for his sake ?" said Mrs. Middleton, "or is it that you think—— ? Well, let it be so. Send for Percival. Yes," she added, "perhaps I have misunderstood. Yes, send at once for Percival."

"I'll go," said Harry, hurrying down the passage. "The message shall be sent off at once. I'll take it to Fordborough."

"Must you go yourself ?" Mrs. Middleton raised her voice a little as he moved away.

"No ; let me go," said Captain Fothergill, turning the further corner. "I am going to Fordborough. What is it ? I will take it. Mrs. Middleton, you will let me be your messenger ?"

"You are very good," she said. "Harry, you will write—I can't. Oh, I must go back !" And she vanished, leaving the two men face to face.

"I've no telegraph forms," said Harry, after a pause. "If you would take the paper to my father, he will send the messages."

Fothergill nodded silently and went out to make ready for his journey. Hardwicke followed him and stood in the porch, pencilling on the back of an old letter. When Fothergill had given his orders, he walked up to Carroll, touched the lad's shoulder with the tips of his fingers, and stood away. "Come," he said.

Archie raised himself from the ground, and stumbled to his feet. "Come ?—where ?"

"To Fordborough."

The boy started and stepped back. He looked at the farmhouse, he looked at his cousin. "I'll come afterwards," he faltered.

"Nonsense," said Fothergill ; "I'm going now, and of course you go with me."

Archie shrank away, keeping his eyes fixed, as if in a kind of fascination, on his cousin's terrible eyes. The idea of going back, alone with Raymond, was awful to him.

"No ; I can't come, Ray, indeed I can't," he said ; "I'll walk. I'd much rather ; I would indeed."

"What for ?" said Fothergill ; "you are doing no good here. Do you know I have a message to take ? I can't be kept waiting. Don't be a fool," he said, in a lower but not less imperative voice.

Archie glanced despairingly round. Hardwicke came forward with the paper in his outstretched hand.

"Leave him here, Captain Fothergill. I dare say I shall go to the

inn in the village, and he may go with me. He can take you the earliest news to-morrow morning."

Archie looked breathlessly from one to the other. "As you please," said Fothergill, and strode off without another word. The boy tried to say something in the way of thanks. "Oh, it's nothing," Hardwicke replied. "You won't care what sort of quarters they may turn out to be, I know." And he went back to the house, with a little shrug of his shoulders, at the idea of having young Carroll tied to him in this fashion. He did not want the boy, but Hardwicke could never help sacrificing himself.

So Archie went to the gate, and watched his cousin ride away, a slim black figure, on his black horse, against the burning sky. Fothergill never turned his head. Where was the use of looking back? He was intent only on his errand, and when that piece of paper should have been delivered into Mr. Hardwicke's hands, the last link between Sissy Langton and himself would be broken. There would be no further service to render. Fothergill did not know that the message he carried was to summon his rival, but it would have made no difference in his feelings if he had. Nothing made any difference now.

Mrs. Middleton sat by Sissy's bedside in the clear evening light. Harry Hardwicke's words haunted her—why did he think that Sissy wanted Percival? They had parted a year ago, and she had believed that Sissy was cured of her liking for him. It was Sissy who had sent him away, and she had been brighter and gayer of late—indeed, Mrs. Middleton had fancied that Walter Latimer—Well, that was over, but if Sissy cared for Percival—

A pair of widely-opened eyes were fixed on her. "Am I going to die, Aunt Harriet?"

"I hope not. Oh, my darling, I pray that you may live."

"I think I am going to die. Will it be very soon? Would there be time to send—"

"We will send for anything, or anyone you want. Do you feel worse, dear? Time to send for whom?"

"For Percival?"

"Harry Hardwicke has sent for him already. Perhaps he has the message by now, it is an hour and a half since the messenger went."

"When will he come?"

"To-morrow, darling."

There was a pause. Then the faint voice came again. "What time?"

Mrs. Middleton went to the door, and called softly to Hardwicke. He had been looking in Bradshaw, and she returned directly.

"Percival will come by the express to-night. He will be at Fothergill by the quarter-past nine train, and Harry will meet him, and bring him over at once—by ten o'clock, he says, or a few minutes later."

Sissy's brows contracted for a moment; she was calculating the time. "What is it now?" she said.

"Twenty minutes to eight."

Fourteen hours and a half. The whole night between herself and Percival. The darkness must come and must go—the sun must set and must again be high in the heavens, before he could stand by her side. It seemed as if Sissy were going down into the blackness of an awful gulf, where Death was waiting for her. Would she have strength to escape him, to toil up the further side, and to reach the far-off to-morrow, and Percival?

"Aunt Harriet," she said, "shall I live till then? I want to speak to him."

"Yes, my darling—indeed you will. Don't talk so. You will break my heart. Perhaps God will spare you—"

"No," said Sissy. "No."

Between eight and nine Hardwicke was summoned again. Mrs. Latimer wanted some one to go to Latimer's Court, to take the latest news, and to say that it was impossible she could return that night. "You see they went away before Dr. Grey came," she said. "I have written a little note. Can you find me a messenger?"

"I will either find one, or I will go myself," he replied.

"Oh, I didn't mean to trouble you. And wait a moment, for Mrs. Middleton wants him to go on to her house. She will come and speak to you when I go back to the poor girl."

"How is Miss Langton?"

"I hardly know. I think she is wandering a little. She talked just now about some embroidery she has been doing—asked for it in fact."

"When Dr. Grey was obliged to go, he didn't think there would be any change before he came back, surely," said Hardwicke anxiously.

"No. But she can't know what she is saying—can she? Poor girl, she will never do another stitch." Mrs. Latimer fairly broke down. The unfinished embroidery which never could be finished, brought the truth home to her. It is hard to realise that a life, with its interlacing roots and fibres, is broken off short.

"Oh, Mrs. Latimer, don't—don't!" Harry exclaimed, aghast at her tears. "For Mrs. Middleton's sake!" He rushed away, and returned with wine. "If you give way, what will become of us?"

She was better in a few minutes, and able to go back, while Harry waited in quiet confidence for Mrs. Middleton. He was not afraid of a burst of helpless weeping when she came. She was gentle, yielding, delicate, but there was something of the old Squire's obstinacy in her, and in a supreme emergency it came out as firmness. She looked old and frail as she stepped into the passage, and closed the door after her. Her hand shook, but her eyes met his bravely, and her lips were firm.

"You'll have some wine too," he said, pouring it out as a matter of course. "You can drink it while you tell me what I am to do."

She took the glass with a slight inclination of her head, and explained that she wanted an old servant, who had been Sissy's nurse when she was

a little child. "Mrs. Latimer is very kind," she said. "But Sissy will like her own people best. And Sarah would be broken-hearted—" She paused. "Here is a list of things that I wish her to bring."

"Mrs. Latimer thought Miss Langton was not quite herself," he said inquiringly.

"Do you mean because she talked of her work? Oh, I don't think so. She answers quite sensibly—she speaks quite clearly. That was the only thing."

"Then is it down in the list—this needlework? Or where is it to be found?"

"You will bring it?" said Mrs. Middleton. "Well, perhaps—"

"If she should ask again!" he said.

"True. Yes, yes, bring it." She told him where to find the little case. "The fancy may haunt her. How am I to thank you, Harry?"

"Not at all," he said. "Only let me do what I can."

It was nearly eleven before Hardwicke had accomplished his double errand, and returned with Sarah. The stars were out, the ruins of the priory rose in great black masses against the sky, the farmhouse windows, beneath the overhanging eaves, were like bright eyes gazing out into the night. Dr. Grey had come back in the interval, and had seen his patient. There was nothing new to say, and nothing to be done, except to make the path to the grave as little painful as might be. He was taking a nap in Mr. Greenwell's arm-chair, when the young man came in, but woke up, clear and alert, in a moment. "Ah, you have come," he said, recognising the old servant. "That's well. You'll save your mistress a little. Only, mind, we mustn't have any crying. If there is anything of that sort, you will do more harm than good."

Sarah deigned no reply, but passed on. Mrs. Middleton came out to meet them. Sissy had not spoken. She lay with her eyes shut, and moaned now and then. "Are you going home, Harry?" said the old lady.

"Only into the village. I've got a room at the Latimer Arms. It isn't two minutes' walk from here, so I can be fetched directly if I'm wanted."

"And you will be sure to meet the train?"

"I will. You may depend upon me. But I shall come here first."

"Good-night, then. Go and get some rest."

Hardwicke went off to look for Archie Carroll. He found him in the square, flagged hall, sitting on the corner of a window-seat, with his head leaning against the frame, among Mrs. Greenwell's geraniums. "Come along, old fellow," said Harry.

There was only a glimmering candle, and the hall was very dim. Archie got up submissively, and groped his way after his guide. "Where are we going?" he asked, as the door was opened.

"To a little public-house close by. We couldn't ask the Greenwells to take us in."

As they went out into the road, the priory rose up suddenly on the left and towered awfully above them. Carroll shuddered, drew closer to his companion, and kept his eyes fixed on the ground. "I feel as if I were the ghost of myself, and those were the ghosts of the ruins," he said as he hurried past.

The flight of fancy was altogether beyond Hardwicke. "You've been sitting alone, and thinking. There has been nothing for you to do, and I couldn't help leaving you. Here we are." They turned into the little sanded parlour of the ale-house. Hardwicke had looked in previously and given his orders, and supper was laid ready for them. He sat down and began to help himself, but Archie at first refused to eat.

"Nonsense," said Harry. "You have had nothing since the beginning of the day. We must not break down—any of us." And with a little persuasion he prevailed, and saw the lad make a tolerable supper, and drink some brandy and water afterwards. "Vile brandy!" said Hardwicke as he set his tumbler down. Archie was leaning with both elbows on the table, gazing at him. His eyes were heavy and swollen, and there were purple shadows below them.

"Mr. Hardwicke," he said, "you've been very good to me—do you think it was my fault?"

"Do I think what was your fault?"

"This!" Archie said. "To-day."

"No! Not if I understand it."

"Ray said if he had been there—"

"I wish he had been! But we must not expect old heads on young shoulders. How did it happen?"

"We climbed up on the wall, and she was saying how narrow and broken it was, and I picked some of that stuff, and called to her, and as she looked back—"

Hardwicke groaned. "It was madly imprudent," he said. "But I don't blame you. You didn't think. Poor fellow, I only hope you won't think too much in future. Come, it's time for bed."

"I don't want to sleep," Archie answered. "I can't sleep."

"Very well," said Hardwicke. "But I must try and get a little rest. They had only one room for us, so if you can't sleep you'll keep quiet, and let a fellow see what he can do in that line. And you may call me in the morning, if I don't wake. But don't worry yourself, for I shall."

"What time?" said Carroll.

"Oh, from five to six—not later than six."

But, in half an hour, it was Carroll who lay, worn out, and sleeping soundly, and Hardwicke who was counting the slow minutes of that intolerable night.

Sarah had been indignant that Dr. Grey should tell her not to cry. But when Sissy looked up with a gentle smile of recognition, and, instead

of calling her by her name, said "Nurse," as she used to say in old times, the good woman was very near it indeed, and was obliged to go away to the window to try to swallow the lump that rose up in her throat and almost choked her.

Mrs. Middleton sat by her darling's bedside. She had placed the little work-case in full view, and presently Sissy noticed it, and would have it opened. The half-finished strip of embroidery was laid within easy reach of hand and eye. She smiled but was not satisfied. "The case," she said. Her fingers strayed feebly among the little odds and ends which it contained, and closed over something which she kept.

Then there was a long silence, unbroken till Sissy was thirsty, and wanted something to drink. "What time?" she said when she had finished.

"Half-past twelve."

"It's very dark."

"We will have another candle," said Aunt Harriet.

"No, the candle only makes me see how dark it is all round."

Again there was silence, but not so long this time. And again Sissy broke it. "Aunt Harriet, he is coming now."

"Yes, darling, he is coming."

"I feel as if I saw the train, with red lights in front, coming through the night, always coming, but never any nearer."

"But it is nearer every minute. Percival is nearer now than when you spoke."

Sissy said "Yes," and was quiet again, till between one and two. Then Mrs. Middleton perceived that her eyes were open. "What is it, dear child?" she said.

"The night is so long."

"Sissy," said Aunt Harriet softly. "I want you to listen to me. A year ago, when Godfrey died, and I talked about the money that I hoped to leave you one day, you told me what you should like me to do with it instead, because you had enough, and you thought it was not fair. I didn't quite understand then, and I would not promise. Do you remember?"

"Yes."

"Sissy, shall I promise now? I've been thinking about it, and I've no wish on earth but to make you happy. Will it make you happier if I promise now that it shall be as you said?"

"Yes," said Sissy, with eager eyes.

"Then I do promise. All that is mine to leave he shall have."

Sissy answered with a smile. "Kiss me," she said. And so the promise was sealed. After that the worst of the night seemed somehow to be over. Sissy slept a little, and Aunt Harriet nodded once or twice in the easy chair. Starting into wakefulness after one of these moments, she saw the outline of the window faintly defined in grey, and thanked God that the dawn had come.

CHAPTER LI.

BY THE EXPRESS.

MR. HARDWICKE, not knowing Percival Thorne's precise address, had telegraphed to Godfrey Hammond, begging him to forward the message without delay. A couple of days earlier Hammond had suddenly taken it into his head that he was tired of being in town, and would go away somewhere. In a sort of whimsical amusement at his own mood, he decided that the Land's End ought to suit a misanthrope, and promptly took a ticket for Penzance, as a considerable step in the right direction.

It made no difference to Percival, for Hammond had left full directions with a trustworthy servant, in case any letters should come for Mr. Thorne, and the man sent the message on to Bremhill at once. But it made a difference to Hammond himself. When Hardwicke despatched the telegram to his address in town, Godfrey lay on the turf at the Lizard Head, gazing southward across the sunlit sea, while the seabirds screamed, and the white waves broke on the jagged rocks far below.

But with Percival there was no delay. The message found him in Bellevue Street, though he did not return there immediately after his parting with Judith. He wanted the open air, the sky overhead, movement, and liberty, to calm the joyful tumult in heart and brain. He hastened to the nearest point whence he could look over trees and fields. The prospect was not very beautiful. The trees were few, some crooked willows by a mud-banked rivulet, and a group or two of gaunt and melancholy elms. And the fields had a trodden, suburban aspect, which made it hardly needful to stick up boards describing them as eligible building ground. Yet there was grass, such as it was, and daisies sprinkled here and there, and soft cloud-shadows gliding over it. Percival's unreal and fantastic dream had perished suddenly, when Judith put her hand in his. Now, as he walked across these meadows, he saw a new vision, that dream of noble, simple poverty, which, if it could but be realised, would be the fairest of all.

When he returned from his walk, and came once more to the well-known street which he was learning to call "home," he was so much calmer that he thought he was quite himself again. Not the languid hopeless self who had lived there once, but a self, young, vigorous, elate, rejoicing in the present, and looking confidently towards the future.

"This I can tell,
That all will go well,"

was the key-note of his mood. He felt as if he trod on air, as if he had but to walk boldly forward, and every obstacle must give way. The door of No. 13 was open, and a boy, who had brought a telegram, was turning away from it. Hurrying in, with eager eyes, and his face bright

with unspoken joy, Percival nearly ran up against Mrs. Bryant and Emma, whose heads were close together over the address on the envelope.

"Lor'! Mr. Thorne, how you startled me! It's for you," said his landlady.

He went up the stairs, two at a time, with his message in his hand. Here was some good news—not for one moment did he dream it could be other than good news—come to crown this day, already the whitest of his life. He tore the paper open, and read it by the red sunset light, hotly reflected from a wilderness of tiles.

He read it twice—thrice—caught at the window-frame to steady himself, and stood staring vaguely at the smoke which curled upward from a neighbouring chimney. He was stunned. The words seemed to have a meaning, and no meaning. "This is not how people receive news of death, surely," he thought. "I suppose I am in my right senses—or is it a dream?"

He made a strong effort to regain his self-command, but all certainties eluded him. This was not the first time that he had taken up a telegram, and believed that he read the tidings of Sissy's death. He had misunderstood it now as then. It could not be. But why could he not wake?

"Ashendale"—Yes, he remembered Ashendale. He had ridden past the ruins the last day he ever rode with Sissy, the day that Horace came home. It belonged to the Latimers—to Walter Latimer. And Sissy was dying at Ashendale.

All at once he knew that it was no dream. But the keen edge of pain awoke him to the thought of what he had to do, and sent him to hunt among a heap of papers for a time-table. He drew a long breath. The express started at 10.5, and it was now but twenty minutes past eight.

He caught up his hat and hurried to the office. Mr. Ferguson, who seldom left much before that time, was on the doorstep. While he was getting into his dogcart, Percival hastily explained that he had been summoned on a matter of life and death. "Sorry to hear it," said the lawyer, as he took the reins—"hope you may find things better than you expect. We shall see you again when you come back." And with a nod he rattled down the street. Percival stood on the pavement gazing after him, when he suddenly remembered that he had no money. "I might have asked him to give me my half-week's salary," he reflected. "Not that that would have paid my fare."

A matter of life and death! Sissy waiting for him at Ashendale, and no money to pay for a railway ticket! It would have been absurd, if it had not been horrible. What had he to sell or pawn? By the time he could go to Bellevue Street and return, would not the shops be shut? It was a quarter to nine already. He did not even know where any pawnbroker lived, nor what he could take to him, and the time was

terribly short. He was hurrying homewards while these thoughts passed through his mind, when Judith's words came back to him,—“I have a pound or two to spare, and I feel quite rich.” He took the first turning towards Miss Macgregor's house.

Outside her door he halted for a moment. If they would not let him see Judith, how was he to convey his request? He felt in his pocket, found the telegram, and pencilled below the message, “Sissy Langton was once to have been my wife—we parted, and I have never seen her since. I have not money enough for my railway fare—can you help me?” He folded it, and rang the bell.

No, he could not see Miss Lisle. She was particularly engaged. “Very well,” he said. “Be so good as to take this note to her, and I will wait for the answer.” His manner impressed the girl so much that, although she had been carefully trained by Miss Macgregor, she cast but one hesitating glance at the umbrella-stand, before she went on her errand.

Percival waited, eager to be off, yet well assured that it was all right since it was in Judith's hands. Presently the servant returned, and gave him a little packet. The wax of the seal was still warm. He opened it where he stood, and by the light of Miss Macgregor's hall lamp, read the couple of lines it contained.

“I cannot come, but I send you all the money I have. I pray God you may be in time. Yours, JUDITH.”

There were two sovereigns and some silver. He told the girl to thank Miss Lisle, and went out into the dusk, as the clocks were striking nine. Ten minutes brought him to Bellevue Street, and rushing up to his room he began to put a few things into a little travelling-bag. In his haste he neglected to shut the door, and Mrs. Bryant, whose curiosity had been excited, came upon him in the midst of this occupation.

“And what may be the meaning of this, Mr. Thorne, if I may make so bold as to ask?” she said, eyeing him doubtfully from the doorway.

Percival explained that he had had bad news, and was off by the express.

Mrs. Bryant's darkest suspicions were aroused. She said it was a likely story.

“Why, you gave me the telegram yourself,” he answered indifferently, while he caught up a couple of collars. He was too much absorbed to heed either Mrs. Bryant or his packing.

“And who sent it, I should like to know?”

Percival made no answer, and she began to grumble about people who had money enough to travel all over the country at a minute's notice, if they liked, and none to pay their debts—people who made promises by the hour together, and then sneaked off, leaving boxes with nothing inside them, she'd be bound—

Thus baited, Percival at last turned angrily upon her, but, before he could utter a word, another voice interposed.

"What are you always worrying about, Ma? Do come down, and have your supper, and let Mr. Thorne finish his packing. He'll pay you every halfpenny he owes you—don't you know that?" And the door was shut with such decision, that it was a miracle that Mrs. Bryant was not dashed against the opposite wall. "Come along," said Lydia, "there's toasted cheese."

Percival ran downstairs five minutes later with his bag in his hand. He turned into his sitting-room, picked up a few papers, and thrust them into his desk. He was in the act of locking it, when he heard a step behind him, and looking round he saw Lydia. She had a cup of tea, and some bread-and-butter, which she set down before him. "You haven't had a morsel since the middle of the day," she said. "Just you drink this—Oh, you must—there's lots of time."

"Miss Bryant, this is very kind of you, but I don't think—"

"Just you drink it," said Lydia, "and eat a bit too, or you'll be good for nothing." And while Percival hastily obeyed, she glanced round the room. "Nobodyll meddle with your things while you're gone—don't you trouble yourself."

"Oh, I didn't suspect that anyone would," he replied, hardly thinking whether it was likely or not, as he swallowed the bread-and-butter.

"Well, that was very nice of you, I'm sure. I should have suspected a lot if I'd been you," said Lydia, candidly. "But nobody shall. Now you aren't going to leave that tea. Why, it wants twenty minutes to ten, and not six minutes' walk to the station."

Percival finished the tea. "Thank you very much, Miss Bryant."

"And I say," Lydia pursued, pulling her curl, with less than her usual consideration for its beauty, "I suppose you *have* got money enough? Because if not, I'll lend you a little. Don't you mind what Ma says, Mr. Thorne. I know you're all right."

"You are very good," said Percival. "I didn't expect so much kindness, and I've been borrowing already, so I needn't trouble you. But thank you for your confidence in me, and for your thoughtfulness." He held out his hand to Lydia, and thus bade farewell to Bellevue Street.

She stood for a moment looking after him. Only a few hours before, she would have rejoiced in any small trouble or difficulty which might have befallen Mr. Thorne. But when he turned round upon her mother and herself, as they stood at his door, her spite had vanished before the sorrowful anxiety of his eyes. She had frequently declared that Mr. Thorne was no gentleman, and that she despised him, but she knew in her heart that he *was* a gentleman, and she was ashamed of her mother's behaviour. Lydia was capable of being magnanimous, provided the object of her magnanimity were a man. I doubt if she could have been magnanimous to a woman. But Percival Thorne was a young and handsome man, and though she did not know what his errand might be, she knew

that she was not sending him to Miss Lisle. Standing before his glass, she smoothed back her hair with both hands, arranged the ribbon at her throat, and admired the blue earrings, and a large locket which she wore suspended from a chain. Even while she thought kindly of Mr. Thorne, and wished him well, she was examining her complexion and her hands, with the eye of a critic. "I don't believe that last stuff is a mite of good," she said to herself; "and it's no end of bother. I might as well pitch the bottle out of window. It was just as well that he'd borrowed the money of some one else, but I'm glad I offered it. I wonder when he'll come back." And with that Lydia returned to her toasted cheese.

Percival had had a nervous fear of some hindrance on his way to the station. It was so urgent that he should go by this train, that the necessity oppressed him like a nightmare. An earthquake seemed a not improbable thing. He was seriously afraid that he might lose his way, during the five minutes' walk through familiar streets. He imagined an error of half an hour or so in all the Brendhill clocks. He hardly knew what he expected, but he felt it a relief when he came to the station, and found it standing in its right place, quietly awaiting him. He was the first to take a ticket, and the moment the train drew up by the platform, his hand was on the door of a carriage, though, before getting in, he stopped a porter to inquire if this were the express. The porter answered "Yes, sir—all right," with the half smile of superior certainty. What else could it be? Thorne took his place, and waited a few minutes, which seemed an eternity. Then the engine screamed, throbbed, and with quickening speed rushed out into the night.

A man was asleep in one corner of the carriage, otherwise Percival was alone. His nervous anxiety subsided, since nothing further depended upon him till he reached town, and he sat thinking of Sissy, and of that brief engagement which had already receded into a shadowy past. "It was a mistake," he mused, "and she found it out before it was too late. But I believe her poor little heart has been aching for me, lest she wounded me too cruelly that night. It wasn't her fault. She would have hid her fear of me, poor child, if she had been able. And she was so sorry for me in my trouble. I don't think she could be content to go on her way, and take her happiness now, while my life was spoilt and miserable. Poor little Sissy, she will be glad to know—"

And then he remembered that it was to a dying Sissy that the tidings of marriage and hope must be uttered, if uttered at all. And he sat as it were in a dull dream, trying to realise how the life which, in the depths of his poverty, had seemed to him so beautiful and safe, was suddenly cut short, and how Sissy at that moment lay in the darkness, waiting—waiting—waiting. The noise of the train took up his thought, and set it to a monotonous repetition of "Waiting at Ashendale!—Waiting at Ashendale!" If only she might live till he could reach her! He seemed to be hurrying onward, yet no nearer. His overwrought brain caught up the fancy that Death and he were side by side, racing together

through the dark, at breathless, headlong speed, to Sissy, where she waited for them both.

Outside, the landscape lay dim and small, dwarfed by the presence of the night. And with the lights burning on its breast, as Sissy saw them in her half waking visions, the express rushed southward across the level blackness of the land, beneath the arch of midnight sky.

CHAPTER LII.

CHAPTER LII.

"Quand on a trouvé ce qu'on cherchait, on n'a pas le temps de le dire : il faut mourir." — J. JOUBERT.

WHEN the grey of the early morning had changed to golden sunlight, and the first faint twittering of the birds gave place to fuller melody, Mrs. Middleton went softly to the window, opened it, and fastened it back. She drew a long breath of the warm air, fresh from the beanfields, and looking down into the little orchard below, she saw Harry Hardwicke, who stepped forward, and looked up at her. She signed to him to wait, and a couple of minutes later she joined him.

"How is she? How has she passed the night?" he asked eagerly.

"She is no worse. She has lived through it bravely, with one thought—you were very right to send for Percival."

Hardwicke looked down, and coloured as he had coloured when he spoke of him before. "I'm glad," he said, "I'm off to fetch him in about an hour and a half."

"Nothing from Godfrey Hammond?" she asked after a pause.

"No. I'll ask at my father's as I go by. He will either come, or we shall hear, unless he is out."

"Of course," the old lady answered. "Godfrey Hammond would not fail me. And now good-by, Harry, till you bring Percival."

She went away as swiftly and lightly as she had come a minute before, and left Hardwicke standing on the turf under the apple-trees, gazing up at the open casement. A June morning, sun shining, soft winds blowing, a young lover under his lady's window—it should have been a perfect poem. And the lady within lay crushed and maimed, dying in the very heart of her June!

Hardwicke let himself out through the little wicket gate, and went back to the Latimer Arms. He entered the bedroom without disturbing Archie, who lay, with his sunburnt face on the white pillow, smiling in his sleep. He could not find it in his heart to arouse him. The boy's lips parted, he murmured a word or two, and seemed to sink into a yet deeper slumber. Hardwicke went softly out, gave the landlady directions about breakfast, and returned, watch in hand. "I suppose I must," he said to himself.

But he stopped short. Carroll stirred, stretched himself, his eyes

were half open, evidently his waking was a pleasant one. But suddenly the unfamiliar aspect of the room attracted his attention, he looked eagerly round, a shadow swept across his face, and he turned and saw Hardwicke. "It's true!" he said, and flung out his arms in a paroxysm of despair.

Harry walked to the window and leant out. Presently a voice behind him asked, "Have you been to the farm, Mr. Hardwicke?"

"Yes," said Harry. "But there is no news. She passed a tolerably quiet night. There is no change."

"I've been asleep," said Archie, after a pause. "I never thought I should sleep." He looked ashamed of having done so.

"It would have been strange if you hadn't. You were worn out." "My watch has run down," the other continued. "What is the time?"

"Twenty minutes past seven. I want to speak to you, Carroll. I think you had better go home."

"Home? To Fordborough? To Raymond?"

"No—really home, to your own people. You can write to your cousin. You don't want to go back to him?"

Archie shook his head. Then a sudden sense of injustice to Fothergill prompted him to say, "Ray was never hard on me before."

"You mustn't think about that," Hardwicke replied. "People don't weigh their words at such times. But, Carroll, you can do nothing here, —less than nothing. You'll be better away. Give me your address, and I'll write—any news there is. Look sharp now, and you can go into Fordborough with me, and catch the up-train."

As they drove through the green lanes, along which they had passed the day before, Archie looked right and left, recalling the incidents of that earlier drive. Already he was better, possessing his sorrow with greater keenness and fulness than at first, but not so miserably possessed by it. Hardly a word was spoken till they stood on the platform, and a far-off puff of white showed the coming train. Then he said, "I shall never forget your kindness, Mr. Hardwicke. If ever there's anything I can do—"

"You'll do it," said Harry with a smile.

"That I will! And you'll write?"

Hardwicke answered, "Yes." He knew too well *what* it was he promised to write, to say a word more.

It was a relief to him when Carroll was gone, and he could pace the platform, and watch for the London train. He looked through the open doorway, and saw his dogcart waiting in the road, and the horse tossing his head impatiently in the sunshine. Through all his anxiety, or rather, side by side with his anxiety, he was conscious of a current of interest in all manner of trivial things. He thought of the price he had given for the horse, five months before, and of Latimer's opinion of his bargain. He noticed the station-master in the distance, and remembered that some

one had said he drank. He watched a row of small birds sitting on the telegraph wires, just outside the station, and all at once the London train came gliding rapidly and unexpectedly out of the cutting close by, and was there.

A hurried rush along the line of carriages, with his heart sinking lower at every step, a despairing glance round, and he perceived the man he came to meet walking off at the further end of the platform. He came up with him as he stopped to speak to a porter.

"Ah! I am in time then?" said Percival, when he looked round in reply to Hardwicke's hurried greeting.

"Yes—thank God! I promised to drive you over to Ashendale at once."

Percival nodded, and took his place without a word. Not till they were fairly started on their journey did he turn to his companion. "How did it happen?" he asked.

Hardwicke gave him a brief account of the accident. He listened eagerly, and then just saying, "It's very dreadful," he was silent again. But it was the silence of a man intent on his errand, leaning slightly forward as if drawn by a powerful attraction, and with eyes fixed on the point where he would first see the ruins of Ashendale Priory above the trees. Hardwicke did not venture to speak to him. As the man whom Sissy Langton loved, Percival Thorne was to him the first of men, but, considered from Hardwicke's own point of view, he was a fellow with whom he had little or nothing in common, a man who quoted poetry, and saw all manner of things in pictures and ruins, who went out of his way to think about politics, and was neither Conservative nor Radical when all was done, a man who rather disliked dogs, and took no interest in horses. Hardwicke did not want to speak about dogs, horses, or politics then, but the consciousness of their want of sympathy was in his mind.

As they drove through the village they caught a passing glimpse of a brougham. "Ha! Brackenhill," said Thorne, looking after it. They dashed round a corner, and pulled up in front of the farmhouse. Hardwicke took no pains to spare the noise of their arrival. He knew very well that the sound of wheels would be music to Sissy's ears.

A tall slim figure, which even on that June morning had the air of being wrapped up, passed and repassed in the hall within. As the two young men came up the path, Horace appeared in the porch. Even at that moment the change which a year had wrought in him startled Percival. He was a mere shadow. He had looked ill before, but now he looked as if he were dying.

"She will not see me," he said to Hardwicke. His voice was that of a confirmed invalid, a mixture of complaint and helplessness. He ignored his cousin.

"She will see you now that Percival has come," said Mrs. Middleton, advancing from the background. "She will see you together."

And she led the way. Horace went in second, and Percival last, yet

he was the first to meet the gaze of those waiting eyes. The young men stood side by side, looking down at the delicate face on the pillow. It was pale, and seemed smaller than usual, in the midst of the loosened waves of hair. On one side of the forehead there was a dark mark, half wound, half bruise, a mere nothing but for its terrible suggestiveness. But the clear eyes, and the gentle little mouth were unchanged. Horace said, "Oh, Sissy!" and Sissy said "Percival." He could not speak, but stooped and kissed the little hand which lay passively on the coverlet.

"Whisper," said Sissy. He bent over her. "Have you forgiven him?" she asked.

"Yes." The mere thought of enmity was horrible to him, as he looked into Sissy's eyes, with that spectral Horace by his side.

"Are you sure? Quite?"

"Before God and you, Sissy."

"Tell him so, Percival."

He stood up, and turned to his cousin. "Horace?" he said, and held out his hand. The other put a thin hot hand into it. "See here, Sissy," said Percival. "We are friends."

"Yes, we're friends," Horace repeated. "Has it vexed you, Sissy? I thought you didn't care about me. I'm sorry, dear; I'm very sorry."

Aunt Harriet, standing by, laid her hand on his arm. She had held aloof for that long year, feeling that he was in the wrong. He had not acted as a Thorne should, and he could never be the same to her as in old days. But she had wanted her boy, nevertheless, right or wrong, and since Percival had pardoned him, and since it was partly Godfrey's hardness that had driven him into deceit, and since he was so ill, and since—and since—she loved him, she drew his head down to her, and kissed him. Horace was weak, and he had to turn his face away, and wipe his eyes. But, relinquishing Percival's hand, he held Aunt Harriet's.

Percival stooped again, in obedience to a sign from Sissy. "Ask him to forgive me," she said.

"He knows nothing, dear."

"Ask him for me."

"Horace," said Percival, "Sissy wants your forgiveness."

"I've nothing to forgive," said Horace. "It is I who ought to ask to be forgiven. It was hard on me when first you came to Brackenhill, Percy; but it has been harder on you since. I hardly know what I said or did that day. I thought you'd been plotting against me."

"No—no," said Sissy. "Not he."

"No, but I did think so. Since then I've felt that, anyhow, it was not fair. I suppose I was too proud to say so, or hardly knew how, especially as the wrong is past mending. But I do ask your pardon now."

"You have it," said Percival. "We didn't understand each other very well."

"But I never blamed you, Sissy; never, for one moment. I wasn't so bad as that. I've watched for you now and then in Fordborough streets, just to get a glimpse as you went by. I thought it was you who would never forgive me, because of Percival."

"He has forgiven," said Sissy. But her eyes still sought Percival's.

"Look here, Horace," he said. "There was a misunderstanding you knew nothing of, and Sissy feels that she might have cleared it up. It was cleared up at last, but I think it altered my grandfather's manner to you for a time. If you wish to know the whole, I will tell you. But since it is all over and done with, and did not really do you any harm, if you like best"—he looked steadily at Horace—"that we should forgive and forget on both sides, we will bury the past here to-day."

"Yes—yes," said Horace. "Sissy may have made a mistake, but she never meant me any harm, I know."

"Don't—don't! Oh, Horace, I did—but I am sorry."

"God knows I forgive you, whatever it was," he said.

"Kiss me, Horace."

He stooped and kissed her, as he had kissed her many a time, when she was his little pet and playmate. She kissed him back again, and smiled. "Good-by, Horry!"

Mrs. Middleton interposed. "This will be too much for her," she said. "Percival, she wants you, I see—be careful." And she drew Horace gently away.

Percival sat down by the bedside. Presently Sarah came in, and went to the further end of the room, waiting, in case she should be wanted. Sissy was going to speak once, but Percival stopped her: "Lie still a little while, dear—I'm not going away."

She lay still, looking up at this Percival for whom she had watched and waited through the dreary night, and who had come to her with the morning. And he, as he sat by her side, was thinking how, at that time the day before, he was in the office at Benthill. He could hardly believe that less than twenty-four hours had given him the assurance of Judith's love, and brought him to Sissy's death-bed. He was in a strangely exalted state of mind. His face was calm, as if cast in bronze, but a crowd of thoughts and feelings contended for the mastery beneath it. He had eaten nothing since the night before, and had not slept, but his excitement sustained him.

He met Sissy's eyes, and smiled tenderly. How was it that he had frightened her in old days? Could he ever have been cruel to one so delicate and clinging? Yet he must have been, since he had driven away her love. She was afraid of him; she had begged to be free. Well, the past was past; but at least no word nor look of his should frighten or grieve the poor child now.

After a time, she spoke. "You have worked too hard. Isn't it that you wanted to do something great?"

"That isn't at all likely," said Percival, with a melancholy smile. "I'm all right, Sissy."

"No—you are pale. You wanted to surprise us. Oh, I guessed ! Godfrey Hammond didn't tell me. I should have been glad if I could have waited to see it."

"Don't talk so," he entreated. "There will be nothing to see."

"You mustn't work too hard—promise," she whispered.

"No, dear, I won't."

"Percival, will you be good to me ?"

"If I can, I will indeed. What can I do ?"

"I want you to have my money. It is my own, and I have nobody." Sissy remembered the terrible mistake she had once made, and wanted an assurance from his own lips that her gift was accepted.

Percival hesitated for a moment, and even the moment's hesitation alarmed her. It was true, as she said, that she had nobody, and her words opened a golden gateway before Judith and himself. Should he tell her of that double joy and double gratitude ? He believed that she would be glad ; but it seemed selfish and horrible to talk of love and marriage by that bedside. "I wish you might live to need it all yourself, dear," he answered, and laid his hand softly on hers. The strip of embroidery caught his eye. "What's this ?" he said in blank surprise. "And your thimble ! Sissy, you mustn't bother yourself about this work now." He would have drawn it gently away.

The fingers closed on it suddenly, and the weak voice panted—"No ! Percival ! It's mine. That was before we were engaged. You spoilt my other."

"O God !" he said. In a moment it all came back to him. He remembered the summer day at Brackenhill—Sissy and he upon the terrace—the work-box upset, and the thimble crushed beneath his foot. He remembered her pretty reproaches, and their laughter over her enforced idleness. He remembered how he rode into Fordborough, and bought that little gold thimble—the first present he ever made her. All his gifts during their brief engagement had been scrupulously returned ; but this, as she had said, was given before. And she was dying with it in her hand. She had loved him from first to last.

"Percival, you will take my money ?" she pleaded, fearing some incomprehensible scruple.

"For God's sake, Sissy ! I must think a moment." He buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, you are cruel ! " she whispered.

How could he think ? Sissy loved him—had always loved him. It was all plain to him now. He had been blind ; and he had come back to find out the truth, the day after he had pledged himself to Judith Lisle.

"Don't be unkind to me, Percival ; I can't bear it, dear."

How could he stab her to the heart by a refusal of that which he so

sorely needed? How could he tell her of his engagement? How could he keep silence, and take her money, to spend it with Judith?

"Say 'Yes,' Percival. It is mine. Why not? why not?"

He spoke through his clasped hands: "One moment more."

"I shall never ask you anything again," she whispered. "Oh, Percival, be good to me!"

He raised his head and looked earnestly at her. He must be true, happen what might.

"Sissy, God knows I thank you for your goodness. I shan't forget it, living or dying. If only you might be spared——"

"No—no. Say 'yes,' Percival."

"I will say 'yes' if, when I have done, you wish it still. But it must be 'yes' for some one besides myself. Dear, don't give it to me to make amends in any way. You have not wronged me, Sissy. Don't give it to me, dear, unless you give it to Judith Lisle."

As he spoke he looked into her eyes. Their sweet entreaty gave place to a flash of pained reproach, as if they said, "So soon?" Then the light in them wavered, and went out. Percival sprang up. "Help—she has fainted!"

Sarah hurried from her post by the window, and the sound of quick footsteps brought back Mrs. Middleton. The young man stood aside, dismayed. "She isn't dead?" he said in a low voice.

Aunt Harriet did not heed him. A horrible moment passed, during which he felt himself a murderer. Then Sissy moaned, and turned her face a little to the wall.

"Go now—she cannot speak to you," said Mrs. Middleton.

"I can't. Only one more word!"

"What do you mean? What have you done? You may wait outside, and I will call you. She cannot bear any more now—do you want to kill her outright?"

He went. There was a wide window-seat in the passage, and he dropped down upon it, utterly worn out and wretched. "What have I done?" he asked himself. "What made me do it? She loved me and I have been a brute to her. If I had been a devil, could I have tortured her more?"

Presently Mrs. Middleton came to him. "She cannot see you now, but she is better."

He looked up at her as he sat. "Aunt Harriet, I meant it for the best. Say what you like—I was a brute, I suppose, but I thought I was doing right."

"What do you mean?" Her tone was gentler. She detected the misery in his.

Percival took her hand and laid it on his forehead. "You can't think I meant to be cruel to our Sissy," he said. "You will let me speak to her?"

She softly pushed back his hair. After all, he was the man Sissy loved. "What was it?" she asked, "what did you do?"

He looked down. "I'm going to marry Miss Lisle," he said.

She started away from him. "You told her that? God forgive you, Percival!"

"I should have been a liar if I hadn't."

"Couldn't you let her die in peace? It is such a little while. Couldn't you have waited till she was in her grave?"

"Will she see me? Just one word, Aunt Harriet." And yet while he pleaded, he did not know what the one word was that he would say. Only he felt that he must see her once more.

"Not now," said Mrs. Middleton. "My poor darling shall not be tortured any more. Later—if she wishes it—but not now. She could not bear it."

"But you will ask her to see me later," he entreated. "I must see her."

"What is she to you? She is all the world to me, and she shall be left in peace. It is all that I can do for her now. You have been cruel to her always—always. She has been breaking her heart for you—she lived through last night with the hope of your coming. Oh, Percival, God knows I wish we had never called you away from Miss Lisle!"

"Don't say that!"

"Go back to her," said Aunt Harriet, "and leave my darling to me. We were happy at Brackenhill till you came there!"

He sprang to his feet. "Aunt Harriet! Have some mercy! You know I would die if it could make Sissy any happier!"

"And Miss Lisle?" she said.

He turned away with a groan, and, leaning against the wall, put his hand over his eyes. Mrs. Middleton hesitated a moment, but her haste to return to Sissy triumphed over any relenting feelings, and she left him, pausing only at the door to make sure of her calmness.

Noon came and passed. Sissy had spoken once to bid them take the needlework away. "I've done with it," she said. Otherwise she was silent, and only looked at them with gentle, apathetic eyes, when they spoke to her. Dr. Grey came and went again. On his way out he noticed Percival, looked keenly at him, but said nothing.

Henry Hardwicke's desire to be useful had prompted him to station himself on the road, a short distance from the farm, at the turning from the village. There he stopped people coming to inquire, and gave the latest intelligence. It was weary work, lounging there by the wayside, but he hoped he was serving Sissy Langton to the last. He could not even have a cigar, to help to pass the time, for he had an idea that Mrs. Middleton disliked the smell of smoke. He stared at the trees and the sky, drew letters in the dust with the end of a stick, stirred up a small ants' nest, examined the structure of a dog-rose or two, and some buttercups, and compared the flavours of different kinds of leaves. He came forward as Dr. Grey went by. The doctor stopped to tell him that Miss Langton was certainly weaker. "But she may linger some hours yet,"

he added, and he was going on his way, when a thought seemed to strike him. "Are you staying at the farm?" he asked.

"No—they've enough without me. I'm at the little public-house close by."

"Going there for some luncheon?"

Hardwicke supposed so.

"Can't you get young Thorne to go with you? He looks utterly exhausted."

Hardwicke went off on his mission, but he could not persuade him to stir. "All right," he said at last, "then I shall bring you something to eat here." Percival agreed to that compromise, and owned afterwards that he felt better for the food he had taken.

The slow hours of the afternoon went wearily by. The Rector of Fordborough came. Dr. Grey came again. Mrs. Latimer passed two or three times. The sky began to grow red towards the west once more, and the cawing rooks flew homeward, past the window where Percival sat, waiting vainly for the summons which did not come.

Hardwicke, released from his self-imposed duty, came to see if Percival would go with him for half an hour or so, to the "Latimer Arms." "I've got a kind of tea-dinner," he said, "chops and that sort of thing. You'd better have some." But it was of no use. So when he came back, the good-natured fellow brought some more provisions, and begged Lucy Greenwell to make some tea, which he carried up.

"Where are you going to spend the night?" asked Harry, coming up again when he had taken away the cup and plate.

"Here," said Percival. He sat with his hands clasped behind his head, and one leg drawn up on the seat. His face was sharply defined against the square of sunset sky. Hardwicke stood with his hands in his pockets, looking down at him. "But you can't sleep here," he said.

"That doesn't matter much. Sleeping or waking, here I stay."

A sudden hope flashed in his eyes, for the door of Sissy's room opened, and, closing it behind her, Mrs. Middleton came out, and looked up and down the passage. But she called "Harry," in a low voice, and Percival leant back again.

Harry went. Mrs. Middleton had moved a little further away, and stood with her back towards Percival, and one hand pressed against the wall to steady herself. Her first question was an unexpected one.

"Isn't the wind getting up?" Her eyes were frightened, and her voice betrayed her anxiety.

"I don't know—not much, I think." He was taken by surprise, and hesitated a little.

"It is! Tell me the truth."

"I am—I will," he stammered. "I haven't thought about it. There is a pleasant little breeze, such as often comes in the evening. I don't really think there's any more."

"It isn't rising then?"

"Wait a minute," said Hardwicke, and hurried off. He did not in the least understand his errand, but it was enough for him that Mrs. Middleton wanted to know. If she had asked him the depth of water in the well, or the number of trees on the Priory farm, he would have rushed away with the same eagerness to satisfy her. His voice was heard in the porch, alternating with deeper and less carefully restrained tones. Then there was a sound of steps on the gravel path. Presently he came back. Mrs. Middleton's attitude was unchanged, except that she had drawn a little closer to the wall. But though she had never looked over her shoulder, she was uneasily conscious of the young man, half sitting, half lying, in the window-seat behind her.

"Greenwell says it won't be anything," Hardwicke announced. "The glass has been slowly going up all yesterday and to-day, and it is rising still. He believes we have got a real change in the weather, and that it will keep fine for some time."

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Middleton. "Do you think I'm very mad?"

"Not I," Harry answered, in a "Theirs not to reason why" manner.

"A week or two ago," she said, "my poor darling was talking about dying, as you young folks will talk, and she said she hoped she should not die in the night, when the wind was howling round the house. A bitter winter night would be worst of all, she said. It won't be *that*, but I fancied the wind was getting up, and it frightened me to think how one would hear it moaning in this old place. It is only a fancy, of course, but she might have thought of it again, lying there."

Hardwicke could not have put it into words, but the fancy came to him, too, of Sissy's soul flying out into the windy waste of air.

"Of course it is nothing—it is nonsense," said Mrs. Middleton. "But if it might be as she said, when it is warm and light—if it might be!" She stopped with a catching in her voice.

Harry, in his matter-of-fact way, offered consolation. "Dear Mrs. Middleton, the sun will rise by four, and Greenwell says there won't be any wind."

"Yes, yes. And she may not remember."

"I hope you have been taking some rest," he ventured to say after a brief silence.

"Yes. I was lying down this afternoon, and Sarah will take part of the night." She paused, and spoke again in a still lower tone. "Couldn't you persuade him to go away?"

"Mr. Thorne?"

She nodded. "I will not have her troubled. I asked her if she would see him again, and she said, 'No.' I wish he would go. What is the use of his waiting there?"

Hardwicke shrugged his shoulders. "It is useless for me to try and persuade him. He won't stir for me."

"I would send for him if she wanted him. But she won't."

"I'll speak to him again, if you like," said Harry, "though it won't do any good."

Nor did it, when a few minutes later the promised attempt was made. "I shall stay here," said Percival, in a tone which conveyed unconquerable decision, and Hardwicke was silenced. The Greenwells came later, regretting that they had not a room to offer Mr. Thorne, but suggesting the sofa in the parlour, or a mattress on the floor somewhere. Percival, however, declined everything with such courteous resolution, that at last he was left alone.

Again the night came on, with its shadows and its stillness, and the light burning steadily in the one room. To all outward seeming it was the same as it had been twenty-four hours earlier; but Mrs. Middleton, watching by the bedside, was conscious of a difference. Life was at a lower ebb: there was less eagerness and unrest, less of hope and fear, more of a drowsy acquiescence. And Percival, who had been longed for so wearily the night before, seemed to be altogether forgotten.

Meanwhile he kept his weary watch outside. He said to himself that he had darkened Sissy's last day—he cursed his cruelty; and yet, could he have done otherwise? He was haunted, through the long hours of the night, by the words which had been ever on his lips when he won her—

If she love me, this believe,
I will die ere she shall grieve—

and he vowed that never was man so forsaken as he. Yet his one desire had been to be true. Had he not worshipped Truth? And this was the end of all.

His cruelty, too, had been worse than useless. He had lost this chance of an independence, as he had lost Brackenhill. He hated himself for thinking of money then, yet he could not help thinking of it—could not help being aware that Sissy's entreaty to him to take her fortune was worth nothing unless a will were made, and that there had been no mention of such a thing since she spoke to him that morning. And he was so miserably poor. Of whom should he borrow the money to take him back to his drudgery at Bremhill? Well, since Sissy no longer cared for his future, it was well that he had spoken. Better poverty than treachery. Let the money go; but, oh, to see her once again, and ask her to forgive him!

As the night crept onward, he grew drowsy, and slept by snatches, lightly and uneasily, waking with sudden starts to a consciousness of the window at his side—a loophole into a ghostly sky, where shreds of white cloud were driven swiftly before the breeze. The wan crescent of the moon gleamed through them from time to time, showing how thin and phantom-like they were, and how they hurried on their way across the heavens. After a time the clouds, and moon, and midnight sky were mingled with Percival's dreams, and towards morning he fell fast asleep.

Again Aunt Harriet saw the first grey gleam of dawn. Slowly it stole in, widening and increasing, till the candle-flame, which had been like a golden star, shining out into the June night, was but a smoky yellow smear on the saffron morning. She rose, and put it out. Turning, she encountered Sissy's eyes. They looked from her to a window at the foot of the bed. "Open," said Sissy.

Mrs. Middleton obeyed. The sound of unfastening the casement awoke Sarah, who was resting in an easy-chair. She sat up, and looked round.

The breeze had died away, as Harry had foretold it would; and that day had dawned as gloriously as the two that had preceded it. A lark was soaring and singing—a mere point in the dome of blue.

Sissy lay, and looked awhile. Then she said, "Brackenhill?"

Aunt Harriet considered for a moment before she replied, "A little to the right, my darling."

The dying eyes were turned a little to the right. Seven miles away—yet the old grey manor-house rose before Aunt Harriet's eyes, warm on its southern slope, with its shaven lawns, and whispering trees, and the long terrace with its old stone balustrade. Perhaps Sissy saw it too.

"Darling, it is warm and light," the old lady said at last.

Sissy smiled. Her eyes wandered from the window. "Aunt, you promised," she whispered.

"Yes, dear; yes, I promised."

There was a pause. Suddenly Sissy spoke, more strongly and clearly than she had spoken for hours. "Tell Percival—my love to Miss Lisle."

"Fetch him," said Mrs. Middleton to Sarah, with a quick movement of her hand towards the door. As the old woman crossed the room, Sissy looked after her. In less than a minute Percival came in. His dark hair was tumbled over his forehead, and his eyes, though passionately eager, were heavy with sleep. As he came forward, Sissy looked up, and repeated faintly, like an echo—"My love to Miss Lisle, Percival!" Her glance met his, and welcomed him. But even as he said "Sissy!" her eyes closed; and when, after a brief interval, they opened again, he was conscious of a change. He spoke, and took her hand, but she did not heed. "She does not know me!" he said.

Her lips moved, and Aunt Harriet stooped to catch the faint sound. It was something about "Horry—coming home from school."

Hardly knowing what she said—only longing for one more look, one smile of recognition, one word—Aunt Harriet spoke, in painfully distinct tones. "My darling, do you want Horace? Shall we send for Horace?"

No answer. There was a long pause, and then the indistinct murmur recommenced. It was still "Horry," and "Rover;" and presently they thought she said "Langley Wood."

"Horace used to take her there for a treat," said Mrs. Middleton.

"Oh, Sissy, don't you know Aunt Harriet?"

Still, from time to time, came the vague murmur of words. It was dark—the trees—she had lost—

Percival stood in silent anguish. There was to him a bitterness, worse than the bitterness of death, in the sound of those faint words. Sissy was before him, yet she had passed away into the years when she did not know him. He might cry to her, but she would not hear. There was no word for him, the Sissy who had loved him, and pardoned him, was dead. This was the child Sissy, with whom Horace had played at Brackenhill.

The long bright morning seemed an eternity of blue sky, softly rustling leaves, birds singing, and golden chequers of sunlight falling on walls and floor. Dr. Grey came in, and stood near. The end was at hand, and yet delayed. The sun was high before the faint whispers of "Auntie," and "Horsey," ceased altogether; and even then there was an interval during which Sissy still breathed, still lingered in the borderland between living and dying. Eagerly though they watched her, they could not tell the moment when she left them.

It was late that afternoon. Hardwicke lounged, with his back against the gate of the orchard, and his hands in his pockets. When he lifted his eyes from the turf on which he stood, he could see the white blankness of a closed window through the boughs.

He was sorely perplexed. Not ten minutes earlier Mrs. Latimer had been there, saying, "Something should be done—why does not Mr. Thorne go to her? Or could Dr. Grey say anything if he were sent for? I'm sure it isn't right that she should be left so."

Mrs. Middleton was alone with her dead in that darkened room. She was perfectly calm and tearless. She only demanded to be left to herself. Mrs. Latimer would have gone in, to cry and sympathise, but she was repulsed with a decision which was almost fierce. Sarah was not to disturb her. She wanted nothing. She wanted nobody. She must be by herself. She was terrible in her lonely misery.

Hardwicke felt that it could not be his place to go. Somewhere in the Priory ruins was Percival Thorne, hiding his sorrow and himself—should he find him, and persuade him to make the attempt? But Harry had an undefined feeling that Mrs. Middleton did not want Percival.

He stood, kicking at a daisy root in the grass, feeling himself useless, yet unwilling to desert his post, when a hand was pressed on his shoulder, and he started round. Godfrey Hammond was on the other side of the gate, looking just as cool and colourless as usual.

"Thank God you're come, Mr. Hammond!" Harry exclaimed, and began to pour out his story in such haste, that it was a couple of minutes before Godfrey fully understood him. The new comer listened attentively, asking a question or two. He brushed some imperceptible dust from his grey coat-sleeve, and sticking his glass in his eye, he surveyed the farmhouse.

"I think I should like to see Mrs. Middleton at once," he said, when Hardwicke had finished.

Sarah showed him the way, but he preferred to announce himself. He knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" said the voice within.

"It is I—Godfrey Hammond—I may come in?"

"Yes."

He opened the door and saw her sitting by the bedside, where something lay white, and straight, and still. She turned her head as he entered, then stood up, and came a step or two to meet him. "Oh Godfrey!" she said in a low voice, "she died this morning."

He put his arm about her. "I would have been here before, if I could," he said.

"I knew it." She trembled so much that he drew her nearer, supporting her as tenderly as if he were her son, though his face above her was unmoved as ever.

"She died this morning," Mrs. Middleton repeated. She hid her face suddenly, and burst into a passion of tears. "Oh, Godfrey! she was hurt so! She was hurt so! Oh, my darling!"

"We could not wish her to linger in pain," he said softly.

"No, no. But only this morning, and I feel as if I had been alone for years!"

Still, through her weeping she clung to him. His sympathy made a faint glimmer of light in the darkness, and her sad eyes turned to it.

CHAPTER LIII.

AFTERWARDS.

THERE is little more to write. Four years, with their varying seasons, their endless procession of events, their multitude of joys and sorrows, have passed since Sissy died. Her place in the world, which seemed so blank and strange in its first vacancy, is closed up, and lost in the crowding occupations of ordinary life. She is not forgotten, but she has passed out of the light of common day into the quiet world of years gone by, where there is neither crowd nor haste, but soft shadows, and shadowy sunshine, and time for every tender memory and thought. Even Aunt Harriet's sorrow is patient and subdued, and she sees her darling's face, with other long-lost faces, softened as in a gentle dream. She looks back to the past with no pain of longing. At seventy-eight, she believes that she is nearer to those she loves, by going forward yet a little further. Nor are these last days sad, for in her loneliness Godfrey Hammond persuaded her to come to him, and she is happy in her place by his fireside. He is all that is left to her, and she is rapt up in him. Nothing is good enough for Godfrey, and he says, with a smile, that she would make the planets revolve round him if she could. It is very possible that, if

she had her will, she might attempt some little re-arrangement of that kind. Her only fear is lest she should ever be a burden to him. But that will never be. Godfrey likes her delicate, old-fashioned ways and words, and is glad to see the kind old face which smiled on him long ago when he was a lad, lighted up with gentle pleasure in his presence now. When he bids her good-night he knows that she will pray before she lies down, and he feels as if his home and he were the better for those simple prayers, uttered night and morning in an unbroken sequence of more than seventy years. There is a tranquil happiness in that house, like the short, golden days of a St. Martin's summer, or the November blooming of a rose.

In the February after Sissy's death, Godfrey went to Rookleigh for a day, to be present at a wedding in the old church, where the bridegroom had once lingered idly in the hot summer-time, and pictured his marriage to another bride. That summer afternoon was not forgotten. Percival, standing on the uneven pavement above the Shadwells' vault, remembered his vision of Sissy's frightened eyes, even while he uttered the words that bound him to Judith Lisle. But those words were not the less true because the thought of Sissy was hidden in his heart for ever.

Since that day, Percival has spent almost all his time abroad, leading such a life as he pictured long ago, only the reality is fairer than the day-dream, because Judith shares it with him. Together they travel, or linger, as the fancy of the moment dictates. Percival does not own a square yard of the earth's surface, and therefore he is at liberty to wander over it as he will. He is conscious of a curious loneliness about Judith and himself. They have no child, no near relations; it seems as if they were freed from all ordinary ties and responsibilities. His vague aspirations are even less definite than of old; yet, though his life follows a wandering and uncertain track, fair flowers of kindliness, tolerance, and courtesy spring up by that wayside. Judith and he do not so much draw closer day by day, as find ever new similarity of thought and feeling already existing between them. His heart turns to her as to a haven of peace; all his possibilities of happiness are in her hands; he rests in the full assurance that neither deed nor word of hers can ever jar upon him; in his darker moods he thinks of her as clear, still sunlight, and he has no desire apart from her. Yet, when he looks back, he doubts whether his life can hold another moment, so supreme in love and anguish, as that moment when he looked into Sissy's eyes for the last time, and knew himself forgiven.

THE END.

